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Isaac Onis. Aaron Moncea. & Jacob Brito. presenting their
JEWISH LETTERS
to Don Quixote, Sancho Pancha & Master Nicholas the Barber.

THE
JEWISH SPY:
BEING A
PHILOSOPHICAL, HISTORICAL and
CRITICAL Correspondence,
By LETTERS

Which lately pass'd between certain JEWS
in Turkey, Italy, France, &c.

Translated from the ORIGINALS into French,
By the MARQUIS D'ARGENS;
And now done into English.

THE SECOND EDITION.
VOL. I.



L O N D O N :

Printed for D. BROWNE, without Temple-Bar; R. HETT,
in the Poultry; J. SHUCKBURGH, in Fleet-street;
J. HODGES, on London Bridge; and A. MILLAR, in
the Strand. M.DCC XLIV.

CONFIDENTIAL

SECRET





JOHN BAPTIST DE B***,

Marquis d'***,

Born the 24 of June 1704.

T. Mynde sculp.



TO

RBR
A688J

Mr. J A M E S,

The P R I N T E R's Devil.



Find, Mr. *James*, that you are extremely punctual in delivering the Letters which I send twice a Week to your Master. Give me Leave to return you my Thanks, and to shew you my Gratitude in an *Epistle Dedicatory*.

You hereby receive an Honour that has been paid to the greatest *Heroes*, and has also been indulged to many a *Dastard*. But as for the Incense bestow'd upon either, the former were oblig'd for it to their Merit, the latter only to their Money. As for your Part, Mr. *James*, you are neither a Great Man, nor a Rich one; for your Master assures me that 12 d. a Week is all your Gains; therefore I shall hardly be suspected of a Design to tickle your Vanity, in order to touch your

iv. *DEDICATION.*

Treasure. But in short, poor as you are, I value you more with all your Wants, than I do a Financier of *France*, whom the Necessities of his Country have render'd Fat, and Purse-proud.

You are an honest Lad; whereas the Officers of the Revenue are generally arrant Sharpers. One of their Names would indeed have done admirably well at the Head of the *Lettres Juives*, by reason that so many of the Farmers-General, Tax-Gatherers, and other public Robbers bear such a Resemblance to some of the modern *Israelites*: But since Yours is prefix'd to these Letters, it shall, if you please, remain there.

I am, Mr. JAMES,

Your most Humble, and most

Obedient Servant,

M. D****.

P R E F A C E.

By M. D ***.

WHEN I was translating the JEW'S LETTERS, I was aware of certain Inconveniences that might attend the Publication of them, and should never have consented to part with the Copy to the Press, if my Friends had not reproach'd me for endeavouring to stifle a Work, in which not only Philosophers, but every courteous Reader might find Amusement. They encourag'd me not to fear the Hatred of the Monks; and at length convinc'd me that since the Respect due to the Persons of Sovereigns was entirely preserv'd in these Letters, and since the Maxims they contain'd were only such as conduc'd to the Public Happiness and Tranquility, the judicious Reader would not suffer himself to be prejudic'd by the Declamations of any Bigots, or Blockheads, who think that the unmasking of Vice and Hypocrify is an Attack on the Deity himself.

NEVERTHELESS, what I foresaw is come to pass. Some People have even suspected my Religion, and endeavour'd to make me responsible for the Sentiments of my Originals. But is it not absurd to expect to find a Jew approving of Maxims and Manners

which are directly contrary to his Law, and to his Prejudices? Was any Offence taken at the Letters of the Turkish Spy, tho' they are infinitely bolder than those that I have translated? Yet, after all, Men of Candor never thought that the French-man ought to be accountable for the Maxims of the Mussulman.

IF the Approbation of Good Judges, and the Success of a Performance are any Compensation to an Author for the Uneasiness that certain Discourses may give him, I need not value the Criticism of certain Blockheads, nor the Calumny of certain Bigots. I have had Letters from sundry Parts of Europe which congratulate me on the Good Sense of Aaron Moncea; and very lately my Copying Clerk at the Hague sent me the Original of a Letter from my Lord *****, in which, while he was in Holland, he gave his Friend his Thoughts of the Jews Letters, in such a manner that nothing could to me be more obliging. I know that a violent Catholic will like them never the better for the Approbation of a Protestant, and that some pleasant Turns upon the Ceremonies of the Church have given several People Offence. At the same time however, they cannot but discern, that tho' the Bark, or as we may call it the needless and superfluous Branches of Religion are censur'd, yet the Substantial and Solid Part of it is set off with a great deal of Accuracy and Perspicuity. The Thing that has disgusted the Bigots is not any Banter upon the Romish

Church.

Church-Ceremonies, but the exposing their Priestcraft, their Fraud and their Hypocrisies ; and it has mortify'd them the more, because the Work has had a Run in spite of all their Opposition.

If the Regard I have for some Persons of the first Rank did not check me from boasting of their Approbation, it would be easy for me to shew, that even in the Centre of Paris, the Jews Letters have met with as great Patrons as they have in Holland, and in England. If we do but take Pains to please Men of the best Sense, what matters it if we are censur'd by a Company of School-Boys, Ignoramus's, Monks and Hypocrites ? Is any thing a jot the worse for their condemning it ?

SOME Learned Men indeed, to whose Taste I shall ever think it an Honour to subscribe, wish'd that Aaron Moncea had given an Extract of some new Books. This he might have easily done : And I have several Letters from him translated and made ready for the Press, which relate only to Literature ; but the Bookseller, more desirous to entertain the Public in general, than the small Number of Men of Learning, chose first of all to publish those Letters that relate to Manners and Customs, which being a Subject of more universal Curiosity, goes off the sooner in the Market. In the Second Volume of this Work we shall endeavour, in their Turns, to please the Learned, the Fine Gentlemen, and the Ladies, who ought to be mention'd first. Peace is also declar'd with the Monks,

Monks, of whom the next Volume makes very little mention; Gallantry, Literature and Manners, being its principal Subjects.

L E T T E R from M. D***, to his Bookseller at the Hague.

S I R,

*A*T length I have obtain'd of Aaron Moncea what you so earnestly desire. He consents that I should regularly send you the Translation of the chief Letters which he shall write upon such Subjects as he thinks worthy of his Reflections. He has also promis'd to give me the Answers of his Friend Isaac Onis, a Rabbi at Constantinople, and those of Jacob Brito, a Genoese Jew, his Correspondent in Italy. As he has chang'd his Name since his Arrival in France, he needs not be under any Restraint. Therefore, Sir, all the Secrecy you are to observe, is to conceal your Translator, whom you would put under a Necessity, if he were known, to disguise the Names of the Persons * he speaks of in these Letters, and to soften certain Expressions which paint the true Sentiments of his Hebrew Philosophers, as it were to the Life.

I am, Sir, &c.

* The Adventures which are told in these Letters are strictly true.

P R E F A C E,

By the English Translator.

TH E Jews that are the Correspondents in the following Letters, appear to be Men of no small Abilities and Consequence in the World. They are even reckon'd not inferior to the most eminent Jews, of whom there are Numbers, not only in *Holland*, but at *Venice* and *London*, whose Opinion of Writings is not inferior to the best Judges.

Isaac Onis, the Rabbi, who dates his Letters in this Volume from *Constantinople*, was for several Years at *Vienna*, *Warsaw*, *Copenhagen*, *Berlin*, and all the Northern Courts, always apply'd himself to Study, and is perfect Master of the *French* and *German Languages*.

Aaron Moncea, who signs his from *Paris*, is a Philosopher, who was bred up among the *French* and *English* Gentlemen and Merchants at *Constantinople*, with whom he had frequent Conversation, and was well acquainted with their Languages, and their best Authors, even before he arrived in *France*.

Jacob Brito had his Education at *Genoa* till he was 12 Years of Age, when he went to *Constantinople*, and from thence we find he proceeded

proceeded to *Rome*, *Genoa*, and *Turin*; from all which Places he dates his Letters.

The Gentleman who translated these Letters from the Originals, and communicated them to the Press, is the Marquis *D'Argens*. He is an Author to whom the Public has been already oblig'd for several curious Pieces, equally entertaining and instructive; and who, like our celebrated Countryman that wrote the *Christian Hero*, has made it very evident, that the Military and Literary Professions, as different as they are in Themselves, are far from being irreconcileable, when they are united in, and supported by, a sublime Genius. For at the same time that the Marquis was an Author, he was a Captain in the Duke of *Richlieu's* Regiment, in the late War betwixt *France* and *Germany*, and serv'd as such during the whole Campaign of *Philippsburg*, in 1734, soon after which he quitted the Service.

Since his closer Application to Affairs of Literature, and since he publish'd his Translation of the *Jews Letters*, he complains, in his Prefaces to some of the Volumes, of his having been maliciously and unjustly censured by Ignorant and Wicked Scribblers, Men that are the Pest and Scandal of Civil Society, and incapable of Blushing, or of the least Remorse: But he declares, that tho' the exposing of Vice and Imposture in all Shapes and Characters had created him so many Enemies, it should

should never deter him from speaking the Truth, and that boldly too, where he thinks it may prove of Service to the Cause of Virtue; *et si fractus illabatur Orbis.* At the same time he triumphs over the impotent Efforts of his Adversaries to stop the Currency of the *Jews Letters*, which he has had the Satisfaction to see printed not only in *French*, but translated into the *Low-Dutch*, and *German* Languages, and reprinted at *Avignon* and *Lausanne*; tho' the *French* Edition publish'd at the *Hague*, of which this is a Translation, is acknowledged to be the only perfect one.

To render this Volume still the more conformable to the *Hague* Edition, the Booksellers have adorn'd it with the Effigies of M. *D'Argens*, and another curious Frontispiece, alluding to some of the principal Subjects of the Letters; and they have moreover added a copious *Alphabetical Index*, in which last respect it is even preferable to the Edition at the *Hague*.

As for the humorous Dedication which the Marquis has made of this Volume to the *Garçon Libraire*, or Bookseller's Errand-Boy, the Translator hopes he will pardon him for the Liberty he has taken to alter the Name of his Patron into one of the same Rank, which is more familiar to our Authors and Booksellers, and even to the Generality of *English* Readers; especially since the Explanation of a late Sage of the Law has taken away the Prejudice

Prejudice which Numbers of good People had conceiv'd against this *Stable Mercury**.

'Tis thought proper to acquaint the Reader, that the whole Collection makes five more such Volumes; and if this meets with a favourable Reception, the rest, which are also preparing for the Press, shall be publish'd in the same manner with all convenient Speed.

* At the Tryal of a Libel, some Years ago, at the *Old Baily Sessions*, where the Printer's Errand-Boy was present, and mentioned more than once by the Name of *Devil*, the Lord Chief Justice K——, then on the Bench, perceiving the Countenances of some of the Jury to change, thought it necessary to remove their Terror, by assuring them that he was Incarnate, and that the Boys that attended to take off the Sheets at the Printing-Press had this Nick-name from being daub'd with the Printer's Ink.





THE
JEWISH SPY.

LETTER I.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS,
Rabbi, at Constantinople.

Dear ISAAC,

Paris —

AFTER a great deal of Fatigue I am arriv'd at *Paris*; and this is the first Opportunity I have had to let thee hear from me since I left *Constantinople*. I wou'd fain have wrote to thee from *Marseilles*; but my Stay there was so short, and I had so much Busines upon my Hands, that I was oblig'd to defer it. 'Twas well for me that I understood the Language of the Country, or else I should never have finish'd my Affairs.

Since I arriv'd in *France* I have not been the better for the Advice thou gavest me before my Departure, nor for thy Instructions founded upon

the Observations thou madest in thy Travels to the Courts of *Germany, Poland, and the North.*

'Tis impossible to learn any thing in traversing a Country with such Expedition, that one has but just Time for the necessary Refreshment of Food and Sleep. Thou may'st therefore be satisfy'd with some cursory Remarks, that arose from the Conversation I had with three of my travelling Companions, and some Accidents that happen'd to me on the Road. And in my next Letter I shall supply the Deficiency of this; for tho' I have been here but twenty-four Hours, I perceive that I shall not want Matter to maintain our Philosophical Correspondence.

The Merchant at *Marseilles* having recommended me to his Correspondent at *Lyons*, absolutely insisted upon my lodging with him; and the Morning that I set out for *Paris* he attended me to the Coach. We were four in that Vehicle, two Merchants, an Officer, and myself. We had scarce travell'd two Leagues, when we were as sociable as if we had been acquainted half a score Years. They were so complaisant as to answer what Questions I ask'd them with all the Civility and Good-nature in the World; and I have already discover'd that the French have generally a much greater Regard for Strangers when in their own Country, than when they are out of it. This is plainly their Foible at *Constantinople*, where they approve of nothing but what comes from *France* or is made there. Two Days Journey from *Lyons* *, as we alighted at the Inn, we heard a surprizing Noise; and seeing a great Croud of People gather'd about a House in the Neighbourhood, we ask'd what was the matter; which a Man standing by told us was this: ' Gentlemen, said he, the House at which you see such

* At *Chalons upon the Soane.*

‘ Concourse of People, belongs to Mr. *Mirobolan*,
 ‘ who is an Apothecary, going to make a staring
 ‘ Figure in the World, and will hereafter be rank’d
 ‘ among the illustrious Saints of the numerous Fra-
 ‘ ternity. He caught Mrs. *Mirobolan* in a flagrant
 ‘ Crime with one of his Journeymen, which so
 ‘ enrag’d him, that he laid hold of an old Gun and
 ‘ would have discharg’d it at his Rival, but the Gun
 ‘ miss’d fire, and the Lover jump’d out of the Win-
 ‘ dow into the Street; upon which the Wife call’d
 ‘ out to her Neighbours; who flocking to the Place,
 ‘ and seeing Mr. *Mirobolan* with Fury in his Eyes,
 ‘ and a Gun in his Hand, belabouring the dear Half
 ‘ of his Person with the Butt-end of it, have had
 ‘ much ado to rescue her from his Wrath.’ And
 what is to be done, *said I*, to this Adulteress? What
 would you have done to her? *reply’d he*: She goes
 and enters a Complaint against her Husband, who
 having no Evidence of the Injury he pretends to
 have been done to his Honour by the Journeyman,
 will be oblig’d to allow her a separate Maintenance
 at her Relations, to whom she is going to retire.
 You don’t think so? *said I*. What wou’d you force
 a Man to pay Money for his Wife’s Falseness to
 him? Our Laws will have it so, *reply’d he*; and our
 Lawyers, the very Patterns of complaisant Huf-
 bands, have approv’d and maintain’d those Laws by
 a thousand Volumes of their Writings.

What thinkest thou, dear *Isaac*, to see so much
 Confusion and Disorder in the Manners and Customs
 of the *Nazarenes*? They are eternally boasting of
 the Beauty and Regularity of their Morals, and yet
 Adultery passes with them for no more than Gal-
 lantry! How wide is the Difference between the
 Innocence of *Israel* and the Debauchery of the Infidels!
 Our Women reckon it the greatest Honour to
 love none but their own Husbands; ’tis from their

Tenderness to their Husbands that they expect that Lamp which is to give Light from the one Hemisphere to the other ; and if at any time their Good-nature and Frailty get the better of their Chastity and Reason, they leisen the Guilt of their Crimes in a good measure, by the Care they take to conceal them from the Knowledge of the Public.

With the *Nazarenes* the Infidelity of their Wives is an inexhaustible Subject of Banter and Joke. The Officer, my Fellow-Traveller, laugh'd at my Surprise. What he said is so deeply rooted in my Mind, that I will, as far as I am able, make use of his own very Words, by which thou wilt discern the same Extravagance in the Expressions as in the Facts which they relate to. I plainly perceive, *said he*, that you are come from t'other side of the Globe. What, surpriz'd at the Gallantries of a Woman ! If you stay any time in this Country, you will drop that rigid Virtue of yours, and become sociable. What, Sir, *said I*, are such Scenes as this frequent here ? No, *said he* ; all Husbands are not such Fools as Mr. *Mirobolan*, to make their Family Concerns public. Surely then, *said I*, People must be very ill match'd in this Country, and that which should make Life happy renders it altogether miserable. You are mistaken, *said he*, we are us'd to Accidents of this sort. The Fate of our Neighbours, Relations, and Friends, tells us what we are to expect onrselves, and takes away the Bitterness of it. Besides, Marriage is with us a sort of Traf-fick. We chuse a Wife as we do a Piece of Cloth, only the one we measure by the Ell, the other by the Lewid'or. 'Tis my Opinion, *said I*, that a Woman can't be very fond of a Husband who values her only for her Money, and that she ought not to be sorry for the Loss of him. ' There are very few, *said he with a Smile*, that break their Hearts

for

• for being Widows; yet they observe a great deal
• of Ceremony.

‘ As soon as a Woman has lost her Husband, you
‘ would think she was going to follow him. She
‘ shuts herself up in her Apartment, which is strip-
‘ ped of all its usual Ornaments. Pictures, Look-
‘ ing-Glasses, all are condemn’d, and black and dif-
‘ fimal Hangings put up in their place: So that one
‘ would almost imagine she was retir’d to a Tomb.
‘ On the least mention of the Deceased, her Eyes
‘ are like two Fountains, from whence flow Tor-
‘ rents of Tears; and her Cries and Complaints are
‘ loud enough to be heard by the Public. Observe
‘ her in private; there she gives ear the first Mc-
‘ ment to the Comfort which is administer’d to her
‘ by her Intimates. A Friend takes the Opportu-
‘ nity to tell her, that she is not yet of an Age to
‘ bury herself alive. *You are young, lovely, and*
‘ *handsome. Wou’d you retire from the World with*
‘ *so many Charms? There are few Men but wou’d*
‘ *rejoice to succeed your late Husband. Believe me,*
‘ *dear Child, the Advice I give you is what I should*
‘ *take myself. You are not ignorant what Opinion*
‘ *the Chevalier has of you. He had a Respect for you*
‘ *while your Husband was living. Don’t you think*
‘ *he wou’d be glad to supply his Place?*’ At this
Discourse the Widow turns her Eyes to the Ground
and simpers. The Lover at this Instant makes a
complimental Visit; his Presence carries his Point,
and the Husband is but just laid in his Coffin when
the Widow marries again.

Are not such Manners and Customs as these visi-
ble Tokens of God’s Wrath? He drowned *Pharaoh*
and the *Egyptians* heretofore in the *Red Sea*: He
plunges the *Nazarenes* in a Gulph of Perdition and
Reprobation; but he has preserv’d his own People
from these Extravagancies, and Vice cou’d never

gain root amongst us. Our Wives have lifted up their Hands to Heaven with us ; they have bless'd the God of *Israel*, and he has not scatter'd the Spirit of Perdition either upon them or their Children.

Didst thou ever duly reflect, dear *Isaac*, upon the Temper of the Jew-Women ? They are the only Women in the World who are not influenc'd by the Customs of Countries : They have every where the same Freedom and the same Discretion. They are alike virtuous in *Europe*, *Asia*, and *Africa* ; but it is not so with the Women of other Religions. The *Mahometan* Women are only kept virtuous by Bolts, Doors, and the Vigilance of Eunuchs, otherwise they are as much inclin'd to be vicious as the *Nazarenes*, and are even more easy to be debauch'd. When a fair Opportunity presents, they soon comply with the Lover's Declaration ; for the Restraint they are kept under obliges them not to let the first Moment slip. But Virtue is the only Rule of the Daughters of *Sion*, who have as much Freedom in *Asia* as the *European* Women have, but are as careful of their Honour as the *Mahometan* Women, and preserve it even amidst the Debaucheries of the *Nazarene* Countries, without being drawn aside or tempted by bad Example.

What this Officer told me of his Country-Women, made me desirous to know more of their Character. I was of opinion, that the Hints he would give me might be of Service to me when I came to *Paris*, and that otherwise I should be confounded to see Manners and Customs so different from our own. Sir, said I, what you have been telling me raises my Curiosity. Give me leave, as I am a Stranger, to desire you to make me better acquainted with the Character of the French Women ; and if you will please but to oblige me with some general Ideas of them, I may be better enabled to judge of them myself.

‘ Our

• Our Women, *said he*, may be divided into two
• Classes, which include all the rest. The Wo-
• men of Fashion form the first Class ; and the Re-
• cluses, or those of Devotion, the second. Their
• Way of Living, tho' in two Classes so different,
• tends nevertheless to the same Point ; they both
• steer, tho' by different Courses, to Gallantry ; and
• this is the Mark at which they join in Character.
• To give you a more distinct Idea of it, I will treat
• of them separately.

• The Woman of Fashion never rises till two or
• three o'Clock in the Afternoon ; and because it
• would be unhandsome to take a Share of her Hus-
• band's Bed, she has her separate Apartment ; she
• sometimes does not speak to him for Weeks toge-
• ther, nor indeed so much as see him, unless it be
• in the public Assemblies, at a Ball, or the Play-
• house, where the Husband is very shy of approach-
• ing her, or speaking to her, unless he has a mind
• to pass for a paltry Citizen, or a jealous splenetic
• Fellow. Madam is scarce dress'd, but she sends
• one of her Domestics with her Compliments to the
• Houses of some Lady Marchioness, Baroness, or
• the President's Lady ; and the whole Afternoon
• is spent in Ceremony. The Clock strikes Five
• before she has determin'd whether to go to the
• *French Comedy* or the *Italian*. Having made an
• Appointment to sup at the *Porcherons*, or *Port à*
• *l'Anglois*, she gives the Preference to the Opera.
• She returns from thence full of the Maxims she
• learn'd there, to which Wine, good Cheer, and
• the Freedom of Conversation at the Supper, add
• new Force ; and she is so absolute a Profelyte to
• them, that before she goes home again, she puts
• them in practice with her Lover till five in the
• Morning, when Day-light, sore against her Will,
• carries her home.

‘ The Devout Lady, on the contrary, shuns these rattling Airs, and this disorderly Way of Living, and puts her Passions under a sort of Constraint. A Beau is offensive to her, and a sprightly wild Behaviour does not suit her Temper. A young Fellow of this Cast might happen to blast the Reputation which she may have gain’d by three Years Confinement: An Abbé, who is equally oblig’d to be as cautious as herself, is therefore the Spark she chuses for her Gallant. ’Tis both their Interest to keep the Affair secret, since the least Rumour might taint the Reputation of the Lady, and deprive the Abbé of the Bishopric, which by his Hypocrisy he hopes soon to attain to.

‘ All Women cannot have Prelates and Canons: These are Treasures that are destin’d only to those that are the most fortunate; but there’s a second Class of Ecclesiastics, whom they make use of upon Occasion. These are our Monks, a vile sort of People of no Service to the Government, and who are in Affairs of Gallantry with the Devout Ladies the same as the *Swiss* are in *France*, auxiliary Troops, which enjoy all the Privileges of the Country. Secrecy being their Livelihood, they slip their Heads into Families under the Denomination of Spiritual Directors, and Guides to the Way of Salvation, and promise to hand every one of the Family to Heaven, not excepting the Waiting-Woman’s Lap-Dog. The Husband is the first who swallows the Bait, and every Day applauds himself for having made so happy an Acquaintance with the Man that dishonours him.’

What Extravagance, dear *Isaac*, and what Irregularity is here! I will confess to thee, that while the Officer was giving me this Account, I was in Pain, and could hardly give credit to it; but I shall take

take the Trouble of enquiring into the whole. If he has not imposed on me, judge whether when I come to Particulars, I shall want Matter for our Correspondence. I confess to thee, that I bless my Stars every Day that I was born a Jew. I cou'd not have accustom'd myself to such Disorders, and shou'd rather have chose to have been destitute of the agreeable Title of Father, than to have married a Nazarene Woman. Thou knowest better than any body the true Value of Jew-Women, and thou hast in Sarah the most accomplish'd Person, who only employs her time in Housewifery, and who, when she has taken care of thy Household Affairs, to help thy Servants dress thy Victuals, and to bring thee thy Coffee and Sherbet with her own Hands, instructs her Children in the Principles of our Holy Law: That's her Diversion, that the Time of her Recreation. I beg thou wou'dst shew her my Letters, which may serve to amuse her.

I have had no Tidings yet either from Marseilles or Genoa. I have sent a Letter to Leghorn to Jacob Brito, and expect his Answer every Day.



LETTER II.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS,
Rabbi, at Constantinople.

Paris—

THOU would'st not know me again, my dear Isaac, if thou didst but see me in my new Dress; I have left off my Levant Robe for a close-body'd Coat: And instead of a furr'd Cap lined with a *Sousamour* * Skin, which kept my Head warm, I

* A Turkish Word, which signifies a sable Fur.

wear a Perriwig that exposes it to the Cold. I would fain have kept on my old Habit, but was oblig'd to dress myself after the *French Manner*, or expect to be stared at by all the Eyes of *Paris*. My Taylor has assur'd me that my Clothes are made after the newest Fashion, and in a very elegant Taste. A Beau, with whom I am acquainted, and lodges in the same House with me, had the Direction of them. He wou'd have them made after his, which is the tip-top Fashion, and whereof he himself was the Inventor. He protested to me, that he had studied a whole Month for the Cut of the Sleeves, and the rest took him up a great part of the Summer. *Surely, said I to him, you must have Business of very little consequence upon your hands, since you spend so much Time in such Trifles.* ‘What, Sir,’ said he, do you call the Invention of a new Fashion ‘a Trifle? One may easily see that you are come ‘from some barbarous Country, where there’s no ‘such thing as Good Taste. It requires more Ta-‘lents, Wit, and Knowlege to contrive the Pa-‘tern for a Suit of Clothes, than to build a stately ‘Palace. Do you imagine it to be an easy Matter ‘to enlarge the Shoulders of little Men, or to make ‘Clothes fit smooth and even upon those that have ‘round ones; to give Hips to those that have none, ‘to make a Skirt, a Plait, or a Sleeve graceful ac-‘cording to the Rules of Good Taste? I’ll assure ‘you it requires long Study and profound Medita-‘tion to attain to so much Science, and that there ‘must be a Genius to assist the Application, or ‘otherwise one can never be Master of it. The ‘Talent of Dress is a Gift from Heaven. Many ‘are very eager to be possess’d of it, but few have ‘the Happiness to obtain it.’

I laugh'd, my dear Isaac, at the Mention of such Trifles. Whatever Oddities I thought Men capable of,

of, I did not imagine they could ever be so weak as to think a Plait more or less, a serious Affair. I ask'd a *French* Gentleman who has more important Things to attend to than new Fashions, whether there were many People at *Paris* intoxicated with such Fooleries? ‘ There are, said he, more than you imagine. Fashion is the Foible of our Nation, and the Frenzy of the Fair Sex. A Woman leaves her Toilet in the Morning, a great Part of which she has spent in dressing herself with the Clothes she bought the Day before, and goes to the Play. The Fashion that was in the Morning changes at three in the Afternoon, and she is surpriz'd to see ten Gowns of a new Mode. She thinks her Dress old-fashioned, and can't bear to be seen in it, and therefore she goes out at the second Act, and shuts herself up till half a score Sempstresses who work all Night put her in a Condition to appear again next Day.

‘ Nor does Fashion extend its Sway over Dres, only, but governs every Action of Life; and Religion itself is subject to its Sovereignty. Such an one was last Week the spiritual Guide of four hundred Ladies of Distinction, who is now the Conscience-Keeper of no more than two or three Servant-Maids. A *Mathurin*, a *Recolet*, and an *Augustin* Fryar have supplanted him, as they have been in their Turns supplanted by a *Mimin* Fryar, who in a Day or two will have the same Fate as they had. The Word of God, the Mysteries of Faith, must all be in the Fashion. A Preacher who is not a Man in Vogue, preaches to the Pews of the Church, or to the Rabble. He is to the fine Gentlemen like a Mandarin of *China*, preaching the Doctrine of *Confucius*, tho' perhaps Curiosity might carry them to hear the latter. The way of thinking about Religion is also subject to

• Fashion. Time was when *Molinists* were in vogue,
• afterwards they were all *Jansenists*. Then *Molinism* came up again. *Jansenism* bears sway now,
• and to-morrow perhaps will be the last Day of its
• Reign.

• The Taste for Novelty extends even to the
• Saints. St. Peter and St. Paul have been oblig'd
• to make room for St. Genevieve. The Credit of
• St. Genevieve is gone, and St. Paris is in the Sad-
• dle, till some other mounts into his Place. The
• Love of God has even been subject to the Fashion
• of the Age. There was a Time when People
• thought they might be dispensed from it. The
• very Persons who valued themselves for the Au-
• sterity of their Manners, were they who intro-
• duced this abominable Doctrine, and supported
• it by Arguments pitiful and ridiculous.'

What think'st thou, dear *Isaac*, of a Religion liable to so many Changes? Stability and Immutability are the Marks of Truth. This Daughter of Heaven never varies, rambles not after Novelty, nor does she give ear to the chimerical Notions of Mankind. Did'st thou ever in Paganism (I don't mean the inlighen'd State of Paganism, but the most gross Idolatry) read of any thing so monstrous as a Debate, whether the Creature ought to love the Creator? At the very Instant that God gave the Law to his People; that was his first Commandment. The *Nazarenes* believe, teach, and keep the same Commandments that were written upon Mount *Sinai*; how comes it that they don't guard them against such Errors? It seems to me, as if the God of *Abraham* has diffus'd that Spirit of Perverseness amongst them; which hinders them from making use of the clearest Notions. They every Day tax us with Obstinacy and Indocility. Wou'd they have us embrace a Law that dispenses with

with our Love of God, and which by the help of two Syllogisms and one Enthymem, throws an Obscurity over the clearest and most necessary Command? Let us leave them, dear *Isaac*, in their Blindness, and give no farther Attention to their Opinions and their Manners, than as they may serve for our Instruction.

The *Frenchman* that talk'd to me so notably was the Chevalier *de Maisin*, who has been a great Traveller. He has been in *Italy*, *Egypt*, and at *Grand Cairo*. He adores Merit wherever he meets with it, and is prejudic'd against no Religion or Nation whatever. He understands *Hebrew* and *Grec* perfectly well. I made him a Present of a MS. of *Homer*, which I brought from *Smyrna*. He is conversant here with all the Men of Learning, and cultivates the *Belles Lettres*. He is qualify'd to introduce me into such excellent Acquaintance as will furnish me with Matter for our Philosophical Correspondence.

The Beau, who is call'd the Marquis *de Farfin*, has taken upon him to present me to a great many fine Ladies and Gentlemen. He was yesterday to have carried me to the Opera which belongs to his Jurisdiction, but he was oblig'd to go to the *French Theatre* to show a Muff and Girdle of a new Taste, which will add very much to his Reputation. The Chevalier *de Maisin* however accompany'd me thither in his stead.

I had not a true Idea of that which they call the *Royal Academy of Music*, which Error of mine was partly owing to its pompous Title. I enter'd into a Room, at the farther End of which there was a Stage, and round the other Part were three Rows of Boxes raised one above another, and fill'd with Persons of both Sexes. In the midst of this Building

ing there was a great Number of People standing *, who with the help of Spying-Glasses observ'd the Looks and Dress of all the Women. No sooner was one of these Perspectives levell'd at any Woman, but I observ'd her Eyes had a languishing Turn, her Lips an amiable Simper, and her Fingers were prettily employ'd at play with her Muff or her Fan. This Amusement lasted till the Oglers began to examine her next Neighbour, who also acted the same Part.

Sir, said I to the Chevalier, *Pray tell me who those Gentlemen are that seem to be so curious, and why those Ladies take all that Care and Pains?* ‘ Those Gentlemen you see there, said he, are a sort of Beaus, who are born to be the Examiners and Comptrollers of the Dress of the Women. ’Tis they who judge finally of their Merit, their Wit, and also of their Virtue. Don’t you see that Lady whom they are ogling at this Instant? Presently it will be reported for a Certainty that she has made a new Conquest; that the Abbé whom she kept in pay, or if you please in play, all the Summer is cashier’d, to make room for that young Officer there, who waited on her t’other Day to the *Italian Comedy*, yesterday to the *French* one, and to-day to this Musical Academy. The Lady, whom they examined before her, has had a Verdict pass’d on her not so favourable. Her Head-Dress was found fault with, her Smile was not thought graceful enough, nor her Eyes so lively as they should be.’

No sooner had the Chevalier *de Maisin* inform’d me of these Particulars, which I never shou’d have so much as guess’d at by any Observation of my own, but I heard a surprizing Symphony of Musick. I

* In the Pit.

turn'd my Eyes towards the Performers, and saw them seated in the Bottom of the Theatre, as if they had been bury'd in a Hole *. In a very little time a Woman appear'd, follow'd by several others, stalking five or six Paces behind her very gravely, who upon her singing joined their Voices with hers: And some Men came on presently, who increased the Concert. I soon perceiv'd that what they call'd an *Opera* was a Comedy in Music, of which I had first conceiv'd a Notion in the Chorus's of the ancient Greek Tragedies. I was so pleased with the Singing, Machinery and Dancing, that I wav'd asking any more Questions for a while; but Curiosity at length prevailed on me to desire the Chevalier to tell me the Names of some of those Ladies who form'd this Royal Academy, who I guess'd were Ladies of the first Rank at Court, not imagining that they were only a Rabble of meer Stage-Players, to whom they gave the Title of *Royal*. ‘ What, said he, do you want to know the Names of those Ladies of Quality? Do you think them to be such? Why, they are only hir'd to sing. That Queen of *Crete* is *la Pelisser* alias *Manon*, who was formerly a Mender of old Clothes at *Rouen*. The other that represents the Princess her Sister is *la Hermance*, whose Father was a Cobler. There are few of these Princesses and these Queens but what have been more than once in their Lives at the Saltpetre House, or some public Stews, not to mention their Absence sometimes, when they have been secreted at the House of some skilful Surgeon. All these People, continued he, that you see upon this Stage, are excommunicated and separated from our Church; our Priests deem them unworthy of Christian Burial, which Disparagement of them

* In the Orchestre.

‘ is in part the Occasion of their Debaucheries.
 ‘ Why then, *said I*, are they tolerated? Why are
 ‘ People suffer’d to come and hear them, and by that
 ‘ Means to be the Instruments of their Ruin? Thea-
 ‘ trical Representations, *said he*, are necessary in a
 ‘ great City. They are an agreeable Entertainment
 ‘ to the Public, a Relaxation of the Mind to the
 ‘ Studious, and an Amusement to the Men of Fashion!
 ‘ They save Gamesters their Money; they silence
 ‘ for the time the backbiting and slanderous Tongues
 ‘ of the Women, and put a Stop to the Drunken-
 ‘ ness, Roaring and Ranting of the young Fellows.’

Why then, said I, don’t you hinder your Priests from scandalizing Persons so useful to Society? I see that in your Country Religion and Government have their separate Functions and Maxims. ‘ You are in
 ‘ the right, *said the Chevalier*. Necessity com-
 ‘ mands and requires it should be so. If our Re-
 ‘ ligion were as simple or plain as yours, our Priests
 ‘ would find it a harder Task to perplex it; ’twould
 ‘ then come nearer to Nature and the universal
 ‘ Law; but with us it is all Mystery, all Revela-
 ‘ tion. Whatever the Depositaries of our Faith lay
 ‘ their Hands on becomes sacred, and while their
 ‘ Ambition prompts them to extend their Claims
 ‘ to all Matters whatsoever, the State could not
 ‘ possibly be safe and free from the Invasions of Re-
 ‘ ligion, were it not for the Difference of its Man-
 ‘ ners, Customs and Maxims. The Church ex-
 ‘ communicates a Man every now and then for a
 ‘ Cause which renders him dear to the State, and
 ‘ gets him a Pension from the Prince.’

What this *Frenchman* said put me in mind of what I have so often seen at *Constantinople*, where many Mahometans make no scruple to drink Wine, to break the Fast of *Ramadan*, nor to miss their Pilgrimage to *Mecca*. ’Tis the Fate of Religions
 that

that impose an insupportable Yoke, and a Parcel of useless Maxims, not to be observ'd: For Man, who is born for Liberty, at length breaks those Chains which keep him in a Slavery that deprives him of the Use of Life and of civil Society.

Take care of thy Health, dear *Isaac*. If thou hast been punctual in thy Answers to my Letters, it cannot be long before one of them will come to my Hands.



LETTER III.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS,
a Rabbi, at Constantinople.

Paris —

THE Sciences are esteem'd and cultivated in this Country, but they must not be pursued farther than such a Point. The *French* are not allowed to meddle with great Subjects; the Court and the Priests being two insurmountable Barriers that check the Discoveries which might be the Effect of Study and Meditation. A Metaphysician must accommodate his Philosophy to State-Policy, and to the Dreams of the Monks, or else he is oblig'd to communicate his Ideas in private only to his most intimate Friends: For if his Sentiments blaze abroad, the Clergy excommunicate him, and the Magistrates banish or imprison him.

About five or six Months ago, a *Frenchman* who had acquir'd a Reputation * thought fit to publish a Book, in which he advanc'd Notions that were pretty bold, and supported them by Arguments that were persuasive and full of Wit †. The Monks rose up against him. It was in vain for him to pretend to justi-

* *Voltair.* † *The Philosophical Letters.*

fy himself, he was proscrib'd the Kingdom, and his Enemies punished him not so much for Errors which they thought they had discover'd in his Work, as for some Banter which it contain'd upon them.

The Learned in this Country are treated with Oftacism*, a Punishment which the *Grecians* inflicted on their Fellow-Subjects. As soon as a Man becomes illustrious for his Learning, and raises himself by his Genius above others, he is banish'd. What I tell thee may seem to thee extraordinary, but it is strictly true. That famous *Des Cartes*, whose Philosophy thou hast read with so much Pleasure, was oblig'd to retire far into the North, being pursued thither by Monkish Ignorance and Malice; and tho' he is in his Grave, yet they daily attack him. The greatest of the Divines †, whose Works were the strongest Support of the Faith of *Nazareth*, was banish'd to *Flanders*, and a long while after they demolish'd, burnt, and raz'd to the Ground the Musæum or Retreat of a Number of learned Men ‡, whose Writings will live to latest Posterity. The Monks themselves commanded the Troops that were set apart for the Execution of that Design, and they triumph'd over the House as the *Greeks* triumph'd over *Troy*: Nay, they went farther; for *Achilles* did not take *Hector* out of the Grave, and drag him to the Camp, but the Monks caus'd the dead Bodies to be taken out of the Ground; and after having committed a thousand Outrages against them, left a great Number of them a Prey to the devouring wild Beasts.

I can by no means approve of this whimsical

* A Banishment for ten Years, to which the *Athenians* condemn'd such of their Fellow-Citizens as were too powerful.

† *M. Arnauld.*

‡ *The Port-Royal.*

Taste of the *French*; they love the Sciences, and yet are afraid that any of the Professors shou'd therefore be celebrated; for which they are reproach'd by the *English*, who having nothing in view but Truth and Goodness, endeavour to detect Falshood and discover the Truth, the latter of which they pursue with Eagerness, and reward them who find it out. The Learned of *France* may be compar'd to Birds whose Wings are clipp'd, so that they cannot soar above a certain Pitch. Whatever be the Genius of this Nation, it puts such an Air of Constraint upon their Writings, as cramps both the Author and the Reader. Several learned Men have recourse to foreign Printers, to prevent their falling into these Imperfections, and that they may express their Thoughts more naturally; but their Books are look'd upon as Goods prohibited and infected. The Guards are watchful on the Frontiers of the Kingdom to see that none are imported; and if any force a Passage into it, it is by Craft and Finesse.

This perpetual Curb hinders the Assemblies of the Learned from producing perfect Performances. There are several Societies at *Paris* that have the Name of Academies, of which the chief and the most antient is the *French Academy*, tho' hitherto it has produc'd nothing but a System of Compliments. It consists of forty Persons, who meet three times a Week, and pay their Attendance very regularly, because the King causes a Silver Medal to be given to every one that comes, the Medals of those that are absent being bestow'd upon them who are present. Their Meetings for near fourscore Years past have been spent in Harangues of Congratulation and Reception, and in prasing each other to the Skies: They applaud one another for their Talents and their Merit, and then return home. They are sometimes taken up in settling a Word or a Sylable

lable ; upon which Occasion the whole Academy labours, disputes, and studies for about six Months, and then passes a Sentence, which condemns some Expression to death ; but it often happens that the Public has so little Regard for its Judgment, that so much Care and Pains are of no avail. This Academy was fifty Years about a Dictionary, of which they gave prodigious Encomia before-hand, but when it came out 'twas universally despis'd. That which completely ruin'd its Character, was another Dictionary compos'd by only one Member of the Academy, which was printed at the same time, and generally lik'd. The Academy was resolv'd to revenge their injur'd Honour, and to ruin the Man effectually ; and therefore they expell'd from their Body an Author *, who had been guilty of no other Crime than meriting the Esteem of the Public.

In *Lewis XIV*'s Time all the great Men were Members of this Academy, and admitted by his Order ; but since his Death they have been succeeded by a Rabble of Ecclesiastics, Prelates, and Fops : Nay they have admitted Stage-Players † into their Assembly, and preferr'd two or three Buffoons and Merry-Andrews, to five or six Men of the first Clas, whom they have for ever excluded from their Body for having banter'd a Behaviour so ridiculous.

There's a second Literary Society, call'd the *Academy of Sciences*, a Society which deserves unfeigned Praises. The Members Time is taken up in profound and useful Studies, tho' they cannot carry their Reflections on Metaphysics beyond a certain Point. They make a thousand Discoveries every day in Astronomy, Physic, &c. which are useful, necessary, and curious. If the Learned, who

* M. Furetiere.

† The French Comedians.

compose this Assembly, were not cramp'd and restrain'd, I doubt not, my dear *Isaac*, but they wou'd soon publish to the World such Master-Pieces in the Arts and Sciences as wou'd soon open the Eyes of the Deluded ; but Ignorance has in this Kingdom a firm Support from the Monks : For 'tis their Interest that the People shou'd not see clear, because they wou'd then know the Tricks and Cheats of those false Doctors ; and of this the Ruin of their Opinions, and of their Credit, wou'd soon be the Consequence.

What thinkest thou of a Religion, the Depositaries of which demand to be believ'd upon their Word, and without rendering any Account ? I look upon a Theologue as a Merchant who wou'd have his Goods receiv'd without being examin'd. Thus does the sovereign Pontiff of the *Nazarenes* * vent all his idle Notions. He expects that those of his Faith should receive his Ordinances and his Rules † in the same manner as the *Turks* receive the Bowstring, which is sent them from the Grand Signior. Thou knowest that they kiss the Instrument of their Death. The Pope requires the *Nazarenes* to rejoice in the Chains with which he loads them. His blind Ambition prompts him to such a degree, as to assume a Title that is due only to the Messiah ‡, who shall come one Day, to make the Glory of *Israel* to shine out again.

I have nicely examin'd to what Cause it is owing that the Monks have acquir'd so much Credit. I have had several Conversations upon that Head with disinterested Men of Learning, who discours'd without Prejudice and Passion. I soon discover'd that Hypocrisy and Fraud had been their principal Mo-

* The Pope. † His Bulls. ‡ Lieutenant or Vice-gerent of God upon Earth.

tives. The Vulgar suffer themselves to be captivated by the first Objects that strike them. They are taken with Appearances, and never go to the bottom of Things. The austere Lives of the Fryars, their coarse Apparel, their humble and contrite Air hinder the common People from observing their Irregularities and Debaucheries. Of this I will now tell thee a Story, which I had from the Chevalier *de Maisin*, whom I mention'd to thee in my last Letter.

In one of the chief Cities of the Kingdom there liv'd a young *Carmelite* Fryar, known by the Name of *Father Ange*, who often visited a certain Sempstress there, and attended upon her more than upon his Function. His Conversation did not run upon religious Matters, for he amused himself with a Subject that was somewhat more gay. The Fryar, in short, assur'd the Privilege of the *Greek* Priests, and tho' his Rules forbade him the carnal Use of Women, he thought he might exempt himself from so rigorous a Constraint: For above six Months he had no Disturbance, and his Happiness never met with Interruption, till one day that an old Woman who lodg'd in a Room over the Sempstress's, perceiv'd a Hole in the Floor, thro' which she cou'd see what pass'd in the Chamber underneath; and the first time that she had the Curiosity to peep, she saw the *Carmelite* and the Sempstress in a Situation that was far from being consistent with Modesty, for the Monk was busy in the Construction of a little Anchoret. Surpriz'd at such a Vision, she calls the Neighbours and makes a mighty Hubbub. The People flock thither in Shoals and all the Quarter is in an Uproar: one thinks the House is on fire; another that some body is murder'd or robb'd. When the old Woman has mention'd the Cause of her Alarms, and thereby quieted their Fears, the Neighbours, think

think of nothing but how to catch the amorous Fryar; they barricade the Chamber-Door on the out-side, which he had barr'd on the in-side; and they tell him that the Father Prior is sent for, to come and be a Witness of his Gallantry. Father *Bonaventure* arrives in a short space of time, and with a magisterial Tone demands the Door to be open'd. The Monk finding there was no way to get out of the Scrape, was quite desperate, and swears he will not obey; upon which the Superior causes the Door to be broke open, and in the sight of the Populace, whom such a Scene had drawn together, he carries back the stray'd Sheep to the Fold.

Thou believest, no doubt, dear *Isaac*, that this Monk receiv'd the Punishment which was suffer'd by the Vestal Nuns, among the ancient *Romans*: But his only Chastisement was two Days of Fasting and nine Lashes, nor had he been corrected at all but for the Scandal he gave; since, if his Crime had been known to his Fraternity only, it wou'd have been deem'd but a Peccadillo.

Adventures of the same nature happen every day, yet the silly Vulgar are never the wiser, there being no Fraud but what they have Faith enough to believe in. If any one is for lighting up the Torch of Reason, he is look'd upon as an Innovator, and as a suspected if not a confirm'd Heretic; so that 'tis safer for a *Nazarene*, who is for a quiet Life, to despise God than the Fryars.

What a happy Religion is ours! dear *Isaac*; how happy is our holy Law! Our Doctors were never for purchasing a vain Esteem at the expence of our Blindness. They have not only imprinted an infinite Aversion in our Hearts to Wickedness but they themselves abhor it. Our Rabbies look upon us as their Children, and we consider them as our Fathers. They conduct us by Reason, and desire to merit

our

our Esteem only by their Care to instruct us. I defy the *Nazarenes*, if they can, to reproach our Doctors with such Enormities. Let them attack them as much as they will upon their pretended Visions: Every Man of Candour will own that it wou'd be easy to prove, that there is more Imposture and Absurdity in the single Volume of * *Maria Alacoque*, than in the huge Works of all our Rabbies. When the Merchant at Peralent us that Book, and assur'd us 'twas wrote by a Bishop, a learned Divine, I thought all along he was an Enemy of the Bishop, and that he laid such a Heap of childish Things to his charge, on purpose to stain his Reputation. But since I came to *France*, I have heard that this Prelate values himself on being the Author of so ridiculous a Piece.

If thou hast been punctual in writing to me, I shall receive one of thy Answers by the next Post. 'Tis needless for me to advertise thee to be cautious. I am in a Country where the Character of a Foreigner renders him suspected in a time of War, and my Letters may probably be intercepted. If thou dost expect that I shou'd give thee an exact Account of what may possibly come to my Ears, and tend to the Glory of our holy Law, and to the Knowledge of the Manners and Customs of the Countries thro' which I pass, say not one Word in thy Letters relating to the Government of States, and the Persons of Sovereigns. A Man of your good Sense knows that in every Country, they to whose Conduct God has committed the People, challenge Respect, and that the Difference of Religion can be no Excuse for not paying it; of which our Books have transmitted a famous Instance in *Mardochai*, who had

* *The Mystic Life, or Secret History of a Saint.*

such a tender Regard to the Life of *Ahasuerus*, who kept *Israel* in Captivity.

Fare thee well, my dear *Isaac*, and may the God of our Fathers pour his Blessings upon thee in abundance.

P O S T S C R I P T.

Since I wrote my Letter the Chevalier *de Maisin* shew'd me one that he has receiv'd from a Friend of his in *Holland*: I was so pleas'd with it, that I prevail'd on him to let me copy a part of it, and I doubt not but it will divert you.

' I have infinite Obligations to you for apprizing
 ' me of the Birth and Adventures of our *Hollandized*
 ' Abbess, the pretended Madam *de J*——*. I
 ' know full well by the Description you gave me
 ' of her that it must be that same *Touriere* † who
 ' ran away from the Convent, into which she was
 ' forc'd for escaping with her Lover out of her for-
 ' mer Nunnery: And the Notice you give me of
 ' the time when she was Chamber-Maid to the Wife
 ' of the Physician *Helvetius*, fully convinces me of
 ' it: She is eternally talking of him, and never speaks
 ' of him but as of her Bosom Friend.

' When she arriv'd in *Holland* she took up her
 ' former Trade, and enter'd her self as Governess in
 ' a Merchant's House at *Rotterdam*, where a young
 ' brisk Fellow that was a Servant in the same House
 ' made her commit another Breach of her former

* See the Memoirs of Mademoiselle *de Mainville*, p. 214, &c.

† This is the Name of those Nuns that attend on the *Tour*, or Turning-Box, in the Wall of the Nunnery; whereby the Sisters, unseeing and unseen, receive in and deliver out Letters, Provisions, &c.

‘ Vows of Chastity ; which being discover’d by the
‘ Dutch Burgher, he turn’d her out of his House.
‘ She repair’d to the *Hague*, where for a long
‘ time she bubbled the charitable People of that
‘ Place, and is since remov’d to *Amsterdam*, where
‘ she continues to play the same Game. ’Twas at
‘ the *Hague* that I knew her, where she chang’d her
‘ Stile and Manner upon her very first coming, and
‘ said she was of a Family of some Distinction, tho'
‘ she was puzzled to find out a Name for it. She
‘ knew not whether she had best take that of some
‘ private Gentleman, or of some Family that had a
‘ Title tho' it were in the Bastard Line. In short
‘ she chose the latter, and said she was allied to the
‘ Family of *Bouillon*. All the Noblemen of that
‘ Family were her near Relations ; one was her
‘ Cousin, another her Brother, another her Nephew,
‘ so that for want of due Precaution she distributed
‘ the Degrees of Kindred to so many, that none was
‘ left but the deceas’d Cardinal to be her Father.
‘ Somebody was so arch as to cast this Reflec-
‘ tion upon her, and tho' she had rather derive
‘ her Descent from a Cardinal than from a plain
‘ Burgher, yet she could not bear the Joke, and
‘ therefore now she makes a Mystery of her Birth,
‘ and is content to leave the Nobility of her Extrac-
‘ tion dubious.

‘ As Quality and Titles will fetch nothing at the
‘ *Hague*, she turn’d Saleswoman, and hawk’d about
‘ Linnen, &c. among the Ladies, having kept
‘ Company with *Jews*, who advanced her a lit-
‘ tle Money before-hand. ’Twas at the House of
‘ a Tradesman of my Acquaintance, whither she
‘ often carries Embroidery, that I had the Oppor-
‘ tunity of seeing her. I had the Curiosity to in-
‘ quire what she was, and am oblig’d to you for the
‘ Information you gave me. I return to *Amster-*
‘ *dam*

• dam the first Opportunity; think what a Pleasure
 • it will be to me to see how confounded she will be,
 • when I make her sensible that I know most of her
 • Adventures.



LETTER IV.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS,
a Rabbi, at Constantinople.

Paris ——

I Have a crabbed Question to propose to thee, and desire thee to communicate it to other Rabbies of thy Acquaintance, that I may know both their Sentiments and thine. I have discover'd a vast number of *Jews* at *Paris*, who don't believe they are *Jews*, or know any thing at all of the matter. Thou wilt think perhaps that I only jest, yet nothing is more true. All that they call here Men of Wit, fine Gentlemen, Women of Fashion, only make outward Profession of the *Nazarene Religion*, for there are very few that believe it from the bottom of their Hearts. They think 'tis enough to believe one God. Many there are that think the Soul immortal; and there are very many others, who, like the Sadducees, maintain that 'tis liable to Death. The latter of these I deem to be in an Error; but as to the former I know not how we can refuse them the Title of *Jews*. They believe a God, who created the World, who rewards the Good and punishes the Bad. What more do we believe? Is not that the whole of our Religion, except a few Ceremonies that have been enjoin'd us by our Doctors

and Priests? But the Ceremonies are not indispensably necessary, of which it is easy for me to give thee convincing Proofs.

Thou know'st that our Brethren still swarm in *Spain*; notwithstanding the Persecution they suffer there is such that the bare Suspicion of Judaism is enough to condemn a Man to the Flames. The *Spanish Jews* therefore have been forc'd to leave off Circumcision; because on every little Suspicion of a Person 'twere so easy a matter to prove it: Thus hath the most essential of our Ceremonies been dispensed with by Necessity. If thou do'st but reflect a little on what I have been telling thee, thou must needs acknowledge this Number of *Partisans* that I have been mentioning, to be the Children of *Israel*. It wou'd be a great Advantage to our Holy Law if they cou'd be taught to know what Religion they are of, and be reconciled to our Communion. 'Tis pity but some skillful Rabbi was sent to them, who was able to open their Eyes; and if some Persons did not care to go thro' the Pain of the Operation of Circumcision, they might be indulg'd the same Privilege as the *Spanish and Portuguese Jews*; only special Care must be had that such Conversions don't come to the Ears of the Ministry. In *Spain* such prudent Measures are taken, that those of our Religion are seldom discover'd. A Father does not let his Child know he is a *Jew* till he is arriv'd to Years of Discretion; and before he trusts him with the Secret, he considers after what manner he shall impart it. If he has a Doubt that the Lad will renounce Christianity, he leaves him in his Error; and from the very Moment that he has trusted him with so dangerous a Secret, if he will not embrace the Faith of *Israel* he is doom'd to lose his Life. Necessity is the Law for this Cruelty, and he is poison'd without delay; for there are a great

great many *Jew* Physicians in Spain, who furnish the Fathers of Families with a subtle Poison, which they make up and reserve for the Occasion.

These Things, my dear *Isaac*, must always be conceal'd from our Enemies; who, if they knew them, wou'd accuse us of Barbarity and Treachery; tho', if they themselves had more Humanity we shou'd not be forc'd to such Extremities; for the Blood of those Children, whom the Fathers are thus oblig'd to sacrifice, will call for Vengeance upon our Tyrants, and upon those cruel Inquisitors, whose greatest Pleasure is to hunt after us like wild Beasts; and the Day when they condemn a *Jew* to the Flames, is to them a Day of Mirth and Triumph.

If any Rabbies shou'd come to *Paris*, they need not fear such Punishment, for in this Country they who profess a different Religion from that of the Prince, are only banish'd the Kingdom; the worse that can happen to them, is to send them Letters *de Cachet*, to go and keep Company with some *Jansenist* Divines a Name they give to certain Doctors who are for introducing new Doctrines. If they were in *Spain* they wou'd not come off so cheap, for they wou'd be treated as cruelly as we are.

I have often talk'd to thee in my former Letters of the Chevalier *de Maisin*. He is of great service to me in this Country, insomuch that were it not for him, it wou'd be impossible for me to penetrate that Chaos of Ideas which all the Novelties that I see create in my Mind. Of this I will now give thee an Instance.

Tho' I shou'd make no scruple to enter into a Church of the *Nazarenes*, being resolv'd to see every thing with my own Eyes; yet I happen'd to be in one of them yesterday without knowing it. I went into a private Street, not much frequented, where

I saw a Room with the Door open, in which every body convers'd with Freedom. I took it to be some public Hall, and never once imagin'd it to be a Temple. As I enter'd it, I perceiv'd something very much like what I had seen at the Academy of Music. There was a whole Range of Boxes, which look'd like those at the Opera-House. In one of 'em sate the Musicians, whose Concert I thought very melodious. The middle of this Edifice was full of Men and Women, with this Difference only, that they were seated, whereas those in the Pit were standing. Every body talk'd, and the Women behav'd just as I had seen them at the Theatre. The Men rambled about in a wild manner, making use of their Spying-Glasses. I had not the Chevalier *de Maisin* with me, to undeceive me. I was never in any of the *Nazarenes* Churches before; and the Lustres, the Images, the Pictures that I saw there, that Symphony which struck my Ears did not serve to clear up my Mistake, because 'twas very near the same that I had seen and heard at the Opera. I did not dare to impart my Suspicions to any body. I look'd about every where for the Theatre, but cou'd see none. At length I perceiv'd a little sort of a Pew, against one of the Pillars of the Room, in which I saw a Man enter with a Grotesque sort of a Habit, which I knew not what to make of. He had put his Shirt over his Clothes, and had a black Cap upon his Head with four Corners to it. I did not doubt but this was the Comedian that was to open the Play. I thought he was going to talk, but he staid some time without speaking a Word. He look'd upon the Assembly, cough'd, spit, kneel'd, mov'd his Lips, lifted his Hands to his Shoulders, cross'd his Stomach and Belly. I doubted no longer that he was a Pantomime, and the Assembly, which

I imagin'd was to have no other Entertainment from him, was so attentive to all those Grimaces, that, thought I, they must needs thoroughly understand that Language. Yet, when I least of all expected it, this Man gravely utter'd a *Latin* Phrase, and then, speaking *French*, he made a Discourse, which I thought a very good one, upon the Dangers to which Comedies exposed People, by stirring up the Passions. I was very attentive, and cou'd not imagine why he declaim'd so much against his Fraternity: For I shou'd never have taken him for a Doctor that reveal'd God's Law; especially, when I saw his Gesture, his Contortions, his Passion, his Tone, sometimes violent, sometimes moderate; and his Air, which was gentle one Minute, wild and furious the next.

While I was under so great a Mistake, I perceiv'd the Chevalier *de Maisin* at the other end of the Room, and taking the Privilege that others did, I forc'd my way thro' the Croud, and went to join him. *Let me know,* said I, *what Place this is, for I own to you I cannot guess where I am.* ‘ You are,’ said he, ‘ in one of our Churches, hearing a Sermon from a ‘ very good Preacher.’ *What,* said I, *do you call that Man there who has such Agitations in that Box a Preacher; and what he rehearses, a Sermon?* Nay the latter, continu'd I, seem'd good enough; but why does not he deliver it gently? ‘ ’Tis to give it more Grace,’ said the Chevalier, to ‘ touch the Hearts of his Hearers the more to the quick, and to give the more Force to his Doctrine.’ Surely, said I, *you must have very hard Hearts, or your Morals must be very bad, if there must be such Contortions, and such Bawling to excite you to Virtue.* During this Conversation of ours the Preacher made an end; he concluded his Discourse with the same

Grimaces that he began with, and disappear'd, by sinking thro' a Hole in the Pillar.

He had scarce done speaking when the Chevalier *de Maisin* propos'd to me to go to the *French Comedy*. *Alas!* said I, *do you forget what the Preacher said to you but just now?* ‘ He exercises his Trade,’ said the Chevalier, as we do ours. This Man is paid for exclaiming against Pleasures; and he crieth aloud; but let us leave him to get his Money in quiet, and not be such Fools as to be alarm'd with vain Fears. You shall see the Preacher himself this Night at the Play. He is an Abbé of no mean Figure, and is a constant Frequenter of the Theatre. He will change his long Cassock presently into a short Cloke, and therewith put off all his Gravity. These Women that you see here are also going thither this Moment. As their Curiosity to hear the Abbé, who is celebrated for his Wit, brought them hither, this same Curiosity will carry them to the Comedy. There will be a new Play acted to-day, and I wou'd fain be there, the Author being a Friend of mine.’

I attended the Chevalier to the Comedy: When we came, all the Places had been taken for a good while, so that we cou'd scarce get a Seat. As soon as the Actor had said some Verses, there was a clapping of Hands to applaud him. At the end of every Scene there was the same Noise, which interrupted the Attention of the Auditory. I was mad with those unseasonable Plaudits. As soon as the Comedy was over, I ask'd the Chevalier, why they did not stay till the End of the Performance before it was applauded? ‘ Most of those People,’ said he, who have clapp'd their Hands, were pray-ed or paid for it. The Author, who had a considerable Cabal against him, wou'd have seen his Piece condemn'd, if he had not a stronger and more

‘ more numerous Party in the House than his Enemies.’ But why, said I, do you think it wou’d not have succeeded, since ’tis excellent? ‘ That’s no Reason, said he, why it shou’d not be criticis’d. The best Pieces upon the Stage have fallen to the Ground at first, and it requires time for People of the best Sense to wean the Public from their Prejudices. For one Person of good Understanding that comes to the Comedy, there’s a hundred that have not Common Sense; but are led by a Pack of half-witted, pragmatical Fellows, who are constant Enemies to Merit and Good Works. In order to balance those modern Zoilus’s, and to drown their Criticisms, recourse is had to this clapping of Hands and to these Applauses, which draw aside the ignorant Vulgar, prepossess them, and make them believe that to be excellent which they would often find fault with, upon the Authority of others, and without any Knowledge of their own.’

But, said I, when a Performance is to be criticis’d and render’d contemptible, there must be material Faults in it. For let People be ever so much inclin’d to find faults, what can they say of a good Performance? ‘ What can they say of it? reply’d the Chevalier de Maisin. That ’tis worth nothing. They don’t enter into Particulars; they only cry out, That ’tis detestable, abominable, ill written, full of thread-bare Thoughts. If any one is for debating the Matter, and demanding what Fault there is in it, they say the same thing over again, That the whole is detestable, abominable and ill written. The Man of Wit, shrugs up his Shoulders, and grieves to see the Scholar at the Mercy of the Blockhead, who by meer Dint of Bawling draws, in all of the same Cast to join with him.’

Mankind, my dear *Isaac*, has been in all Ages the same. In the past Centuries a noble Emulation has been the Spur of great Genius's, and base Envy has been the Portion of vile and Fordid Minds: And 'tis just the same now.

A very merry Adventure happen'd yesterday in the Suburb of St. *Martin*. Two young Musketeers being sat down to Supper with their Mistresses, at a House of not the best Reputation, were surpriz'd by the Commissary of the Quarter, who proceeded immediately according to the Duty of his Office, and after having scribbled upon some Paper, was just going to lay hold of the Girls; but as he was presenting the Paper to be sign'd by the Musketeers, who had time to consult together while he was writing it, one of them advanc'd to the Girls and the other put out the Candle, and drawing his Sword, cry'd *kill, kill*. The Commissary and his Archers being ready to die for fear, and being apprehensive that they shou'd be wounded, fell with their Faces flat to the Ground, to avoid the Swords, which they thought flew about the Room. During this the Musketeers whipp'd to the Door, carry'd off the two Damsels, and as they went out turn'd the Lock upon the Commissary; who when the Noise was ceas'd, and the Danger, as he thought, all over, try'd to get out, but was under a Necessity of forcing the Door open, which, since he groped in the Dark, was not an easy Matter. During this, the two loving Couples found means to get away.

Fare thee well, dear *Isaac*, and may the God of our Fathers bless thee with Riches, and a numerous Issue.



LETTER V.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS,
a Rabbi at Constantinople.

Paris —

IN my former Letters I have sent thee some Reflections of mine upon such Things as have hitherto struck me most at this City, and I expected to have had, at least, one Letter from thee in answer; but 'tis a Comfort I have not yet obtained: Which Deficiency of thine, I am more willing to impute to want of Opportunity than to Idleness.

Nevertheless, tho' I have not receiv'd one Letter from thee, I know what is doing at *Constantinople*, and in the principal Towns of the World. A printed Paper is publish'd here 'twice a Week, in which are contain'd the chief Transactions of the Day. The Author of it has a Communication with People of all Nations, and knows from his Cabinet what is passing at *Ispahan*. 'Tis true, that he is sometimes deceiv'd by his Correspondents, and that in his Turn he deceives the Public; but when he has propagated a false Piece of News, and knows it afterwards to be such, he has the Honesty to own his Mistake.

There's an infinite Number of other Papers that fly about, of which some treat of Literature, others of Politics, and some of Gallantry: The last of these are most in Request, especially by the Ladies and the Abbés. Those which treat of Literature are not so much in vogue, yet they have their Admirers:

But the most ridiculous of all are certain political Writers, who pretend to be thorowly acquainted with the Interest of Princes. The Emperor conceals nothing from them: The King of *France* lets them into all his Secrets. They advise one *German* Prince to be cautious how he signs a Treaty that may be against his Interest, and tell another 'tis for his Good to accede to it. There's not the least Movement at Court but they know the secret Springs of it. If thou imagine that the Writers of these political Pieces are Men train'd up in State-Affairs, educated in the Ministry, or such as have any the least Correspondence with the Ministers, thou wou'dst be mistaken: For they are born in a Condition that sets them at a great Distance from the Administration of Affairs, and have no other Certainty for what they treat of, than certain wild Speculations, and positive Prejudices strengthen'd by Ideas of their own Conception.

There are other Works of more Importance, which are publish'd, some every three Months, others every six Months. These are called Journals, of which there are two or three worth reading, especially that call'd the *Journal des Savans*, which deserves the Esteem of the Ingenious. But of Works of this fort there are so many that they almost surpass the Number of Authors. These Pieces may be consider'd as public Cryers paid by the Booksellers to commend the Books they print, and to promote the Sale of them by prepossessing the Public in their favour. Every Bookseller keeps a Journalist in Pay to commend the Works of his own publishing, and to cry down those in the Shops of his Brethren. There's a Society of *Nazarene Doctors* here, who have several of them at their Command, and make them write upon what Subjects they please. They give them the first Hints, and model their Expressions;

sions ; and these Authors are * properly no more than Secretaries or Transcribers, and are therefore generally despised, and have no other Readers but such as thro' Fear or Ambition are attach'd to those *Nazarene Doctors* †, whose Credit is powerful, and Hatred implacable. A considerable Party of Ecclesiastics, their staunch Enemies, print a public Paper ||, which has put them all in a Rage. They have labour'd in vain to find out the Author, who has had the Art to conceal himself, and 'tis happy for him that he has ; for if he had been discover'd, he wou'd have been severely punish'd ; and indeed he deserves a Punishment that is exemplary, not for having written against the Monks and Priests, but for having fail'd more than once of the Respect due to the Sovereign, the Ministry and the Nation. This part of my Letter leads me imperceptibly to speak of the Respect which Subjects owe to their Sovereigns.

'Tis my Opinion, dear *Isaac*, that the Welfare of the People depends on their Submission to the Laws of the State, and to the Orders of those to whom has been committed the Government of it. The Tranquility and Peace of a Kingdom consist in the Harmony and Union between the Sovereign and the Subjects: When that Union does not subsist, every thing is in a Combustion, and the frequent Shocks which Discord gives to a State must make it tumble and fall to pieces. The *Ottoman Empire* can never be ruin'd but by its own Forces : It harbours its most cruel Enemies in its Bosom, and its changing of Viziers, dethroning of its Sultans, and the Conduct of its Janizaries always ready to revolt, are so many Fits of Rage as tear its Entrails to pieces.

* The Journalists de Trevoux.

† The Jesuits.

|| The *Nouvelles Ecclesiastiques*.

This must be own'd in Justice to the *French*, that they love their Monarch, and we see none of those Catastrophes here which are so common at *Constantinople*. But what will appear strange to thee is, that the domestic Troubles of this State are not occasion'd either by the Great Men, or by the Nobility, or by the Troops, or by the common People. Thou wilt take this to be a Riddle, and wilt be at a loss to imagine what else can be the Cause of them. Thy Surprize will be greater still, when I tell thee that the Authors of them are the Monks and Clergy, who play the same Pranks here as the Janizaries and Spahis do in *Turky*, and are divided into two Parties, as opposite to one another as are those two military Bodies. The cause of their Hatred is an Order issued by the sovereign Pontiff, by which he enjoins all the *Nazarenes* to believe, write, and maintain, that he thinks justly, when he is in the wrong *. This Order occasioned the Revolt of a great many People, and especially some mathematical Doctors, who could not find that this Proposition could be proved geometrically. They therefore appeal'd to the Majority of the Votes of all the subaltern Pontiffs; but tho' they had no Reason to expect it, they were condemn'd, and those Pontiffs determined that their Sovereign had Reason on his side, and that he thought right when he thought wrong. The Doctors, who cannot be reconciled to such a Determination, and will not submit to it, not knowing at the same time what Reason to alledge for not obeying it, have thought fit to maintain, that the Decision of the Pontiffs ought to have been made in a general Assembly, wherein all should have been present, and that this Question could not have been legally decided, because they had given their Votes separately,

* The Infallibility of the Pope.

and

and each in his own Country *. The others have exclaim'd against a Proposition so extraordinary, and said their Enemies only requir'd this Assembly (which was by the way impossible to be held) to have a Pretence for maintaining their Error, and that 'twas plain that a Man did not change his Opinion by being oblig'd to travel.

The Ministry, tir'd out with all these Disputes, commanded both Parties to be silent, but neither obey'd; and, to give a Colour to their Disobedience, they thought of this pleasant Expedient: They accused each other of being bad Subjects, Enemies to the State, and Rebels to the King; and, under pretence of defending the Prince's Interests, they attack'd each other more vigorously than ever. That State of Peace and Inactivity which the *French* then enjoyed, whose Genius is naturally fond of Novelty, made a great number of People take part in this Quarrel, the Consequences of which prov'd dangerous to the State; but the War, and the Punishment of some, who wou'd not believe that the sovereign Pontiff argued rationally when he doated, has very much appeas'd the Divisions.

I will confess to thee, my dear *Isaac*, that if I had been one of the Ministry of *France* at the Beginning of this Affair, I should have foreseen the Consequences, and prevented them. The *Venetians*, to whose Genius in Politics thou art no Stranger, often receive these Pontifical Writings, and throw them without Perusal among many others into a Chest, which serves always for that purpose. It would have been prudent to have observed the same Conduct here: But when the Sovereign declared that he would have this Writing received, and that he looked upon those who refused it, to be Ene-

* Diocese.

mies

mies of the Government, the Disobedience of the Subjects became a Crime; for the public Good, and the Peace and Tranquility of the Country, demanded this Complaisance at their Hands.

Not, my dear *Isaac*, that I allow the King that blind and despotic Power which the Sultans exercise; no, that's not my Opinion. I would have a King be the Father of his People, and not their Tyrant. But I maintain, that, for the Welfare of the State, he ought to have a superior Power, and that 'tis necessary he should be as much above his People, as the Laws ought to be above him. Nay, I will add, that if he violate the Laws, the Punishment he deserves for it cannot, and ought not, to be cognizable by his Subjects, but must be left to the Judgment of Heaven. What Confusion, Disturbance and Division wou'd there not follow from the contrary Principle? When there are two Parties in a State, 'tis impossible for a King to please both alike. The Malecontents might easily plead the Necessity of preventing the Breach of the Laws in Excuse for their Rebellion.

We seldom find in our Books that our Forefathers took Arms against the Kings of *Israel*; and if they did, God permitted that they should be severely punished, both they and their Leaders. The Fate of *Absalom* may serve for a Warning to those who suffer themselves to be drawn aside by the Spirit of Rebellion. I hope thou wilt think my Reflections just. I know that they are not unanswerable, but am of Opinion, that they have a Tendency to preserve the Peace of Society.

The Letters I write to thee may suffice to give thee an Idea of those Papers I have been speaking of to thee. If I were to communicate them to any body that shou'd take it in his Head to make them public, he wou'd print them periodically; in which

Cafe they might be approv'd by some, and be censor'd by others ; but I believe they wou'd find dangerous Enemies in the Monks, who wou'd never forgive me for the free manner in which I treat them. The Feats of their Gallantry, of which I sometimes acquaint thee, wou'd be Affronts for which sooner or later they wou'd take Revenge. They are continually preaching up the Necessity of Forgiveness, and yet never practise it themselves ; of which I will now give thee a Proof.

Some time ago a Recollect Fryar, whom they call Father *Placide*, had the Tuition of a very lovely Lafs, who was a Lady's Chamber-maid. The Opportunities that he commonly chose to give the fair Penitent his Instructions, were when her Mistress was out of the way. He did not waste his Moments in trifling Chit-chat, but made so good use of his time, that 'twas his own Fault if he did not give his Pupil a Foretaste of the Pleasures which he promis'd her in the World to come ; for the canting Monk had made the Girl believe, that he had a Prerogative to take away all the Crime of such an Action. Jeanneton, who was a mighty Devotee, and who would not for all the World transgress his Law, wou'd not have exchang'd her Lover for the greatest Prince upon Earth ; such a Veneration had she for the Man that had the Power of blotting out such a Sin. *Father*, said she to him one Day, *I wonder that my Mistress has to do with the Chevalier D—, and that she does not rather take to one or other of your Fryars ; but perhaps they have not the Power of taking away the Sins of married Women.* No, said he, we poor Monks have not a Power so extensive ; Adultery is a Case reserv'd to our Prelates. Nay, you would lose the Indulgence I give you, and fall into a greater Crime if ever you should reveal what passes betwixt us. Fear nothing, said Jeanneton, and be assur'd

assur'd of my Secrecy. For near six Months nothing happen'd: But one Day when this spiritual Director had overdone himself in his Instructions, he was so heartily tir'd, that he could not bear to sit in his full Habit, but doff'd his upper Garments, and sat in his Sandals, Breeches, and Waistcoat. When he was in this airy Garb, *Jeanneton's* Mistress came home at the very Instant quite unexpected. She call'd *Jeanneton*, but had no Answer; and hearing a Bustle in her Chamber, Curiosity induc'd her to peep through the Key-hole, when she perceiv'd the Fryar at her Toilet putting on his Cowl and Cloak. Whatever was her Surprize at such a Sight, she resolv'd to put away the Scandal from her, and therefore with an Air of Authority she commanded the Door to be open'd, threatening otherwise to call in People, and to have it broke open. Then the Monk, with a very demure Countenance, came to open it, and casting his Eyes down to the Ground, *Madam*, said he, *your Pardon. I was not willing that the Sacrament of Penance should be interrupted, and I was come to the Words, I absolve you, just as you call'd for Jeanneton*—*Father*, said the Lady interrupting him, *you shall not be under so much Restraint for the future. Be gone, both she and you, out of my House, and take care how either of you be ever seen here again.*

Thou would'st be apt to think, dear *Isaac*, that the Monk shou'd have bles'd his Stars that he came so well out of the Scrape; but he was resolv'd to take a Revenge for the Affront he thought had been put upon him. *Jeanneton* having told him, that the Chevalier *D**** had an Amour with her Mistress, what does the Fryar but writes an anonymous Letter to her Husband full of Slander, in which he discovers the whole Affair to him. It was found out afterwards that he was the Author of the Letter; but

but the Lady was so wise as not to punish him for it, because she did not care that the Affair should be talk'd of abroad.



LETTER VI.

JACOB BRITO to AARON MONCECA.

Rome —

I Direct my Letter to thee at *Paris*, because since I had thy last from *Marseilles*, I doubt not but thou art by this time arriv'd there. Having been oblig'd to go to *Rome*, where I still continue, I had not an Opportunity to discharge the Commissions thou gavest me in charge on the part of *Isaac Onis*. As soon as I return to *Genoa*, I will dispatch what he has desir'd of me, and send it to him by the same Ship that has brought me from *Constantinople*. If what thou seest in *France* surprize thee as much as many things which I find here do me, I doubt not but we shall both be great Gainers by communicating our Reflections to each other.

Three sorts of People are almost the only Inhabitants of this City, viz. Fryars, Painters, and Whores. 'Tis as rare to meet with a Shoemaker, a Taylor, and a Merchant at *Rome*, as 'tis to meet with a Priest and a common Strumpet in other Countries. The *Nazarene* Doctors here teach the People that there is but one God. They homage him as a great King, compose a magnificent Court for him, and give him a great Number of Princes and Lords to adorn it; and the Clergy are the Men in whom the Right of granting the Letters Patent to those who

who are to enjoy those Posts is vested. As the said Employments are sold very dear, and the sovereign Pontiff finds his Account in the Sale, he takes care every now and then to make numerous Promotions; which in the *Nazarene Terms* are call'd *The Canonizing of Saints*; the Writ for which purpose costs 100,000 Crowns *per Head*. They whose Heirs are able to give such a Sum, are exalted to this high Rank; but others, who have poor Families, let their Merit be ever so great, are content with being *beatify'd*. The former of these may be compar'd to Dukes, and the latter to Marquisses. They are all noble, but different in Dignities. Consequently, my dear *Aaron*, if thee and I should die *Nazarenes*, whatsoever Esteem we may have liv'd to acquire upon Earth, we cou'd never expect to be higher than the Rank of Marquisses in Paradise.

Politics in this Country are strain'd to the utmost Degree. Avarice bears also vast Sway. 'Tis the common Sin of the People, who make Profit of every thing. And since they set the Honours and Dignities of the other World to Sale, judge what they must make of the Offices and Employments of this.

I have found a notable Resemblance between the Government of *Rome* and that of *Constantinople*. As soon as a Person is promoted to the Dignity of a Grand Vizier, all the Creatures of his Predecessor are displac'd, and often disgrac'd. He gives and sells all Employments. So 'tis here. No sooner is he Pontiff dead, but his Nephews lose all their Credit. The Kindred of the new-one assume the Reins of Government, and sell and grant Offices. The Vizier compels the Bashas to make him considerable Presents; the Bashas make themselves amends by extorting others from the Governors of Towns, who to raise the Money fleece and oppress the People.

ple. The sovereign Pontiff demands a Tribute of the Prelates *. These lay considerable Taxes on the Priests; and the Priests make the People pay even for the Ground which serves them for Burial.

I will push this Parallel farther, and thou wilt find it as true. When the Grand Signior wants Money, he sends a Ring of Hair of his own making † to the Basha of *Cairo*, and a Bow or a Javelin to the Basha of *Smyrna*. The Honour of receiving such a Present is always requited with a great many Purses from the Person to whom it is sent. The sovereign Pontiff behaves in the same manner. 'Tis true he does not employ himself in manual Operations like the Sultans, and therefore sends neither Bow nor Ring; but he directs a Writing to all the subaltern Pontiffs, by which every *Nazarene* to whom they distribute it, on the Payment of a certain Sum of Money, is dispensed from a certain Article of Religion, as eating no Flesh, fasting during Lent, &c. There are a great many People, who for their Convenience buy this Merchandise. There is another of a greater Price, but not so commonly sold, which is negociated when Persons are to marry one of their Kindred. Besides the Merchandise of this sort, which cannot be had, if not paid for according to the Tariff at which they are fix'd, there's a great many other Things, the Price of which is left to every body's Generosity, and which go under the Denomination of Alms.

In order to stir up the Charity of the *Nazarenes*, the Pontiff every now and then opens the Gates of Heaven. Formerly this happen'd but once in a hundred Years. Indeed when it was perceiv'd that Men did not live so long, the Ceremony was perform'd

every

* The Bulls for Bishoprics.

† The Grand Signiors all learn some Handicraft.

every twenty-five Years, and sometimes they did not stay till that Term was expir'd. It must not be imagin'd, that the Road to Heaven is absolutely shut up at other times, but then the Passage is narrower, and the Impacts paid for entering it are the more considerable. During the Jubilee, Paradise is a free Fair, and the Custom-house Duties are abated one half. As soon as the Days of Privilege are expir'd, the same Duties and Customs are renew'd as before.

The other Day I went to see the Temple of St. Peter, the Grandeur, Magnificence, and Regularity of which stately Building are amazing to behold. Its Splendor put me in mind of the famous Temple of *Jerusalem*, of which we have a Description in our Books. As I was surveying the Beauties of this of St. Peter, I saw five or six Priests * fitting in little Wooden Boxes †, with long Wands in their Hands, with which they touch'd the Heads of those within their Reach, who as they pass'd by bent the Knee. I inquir'd what this Ceremony was: *These Men, said they, are grand Penitentiaries; they have a Right to absolve from all Sins: and as it wou'd be impossible for them to hear the Crimes of People of all the Nations in the World, that come to them for Confession, they wash and cleanse the Soul from its Impurities, and purge it from Crimes, by touching the Head with the End of their Wand.* I thought this a ridiculous Ceremony; however I did not say a Word.

From St. Peter's Church I went into another just by it; and while I was viewing it, two Men attended me with a Plate, and ask'd me to bestow something for the Support of St. James. Being always ready to relieve the Unfortunate, I put my Hand in my Pocket, and gave them a Testoon. But as

* Grand Penitentiaries.

† Confession-Chairs.

soon

soon as I was got into the Street, I desir'd a Merchant of my Acquaintance that went along with me, to tell me who that St. *James* was that was in such Want, and whether that was he to whom I had given the Alms. After he had laugh'd heartily at my Question. *This St. James, said he, who you think is in Want, is a Saint that lacks for nothing; for 'tis above 1600 Years that he has been dead. And why then, said I, do they beg Relief for him? 'Tis,* replied he, *for the Maintenance of the Priests who serve in his Temple.* I presently perceiv'd that this was one of the Methods made use of by the Monks to get Money, of which till then I had no Notion. To be sure there are many others too that I know nothing of, and which I will impart to thee when I find them out.

The Temple of St. *James* was formerly but a plain Chapel, and owes its Building to a Miracle. When St. *Peter's* Church was finishing, all the Columns and Capitals which were carried to adorn that famous Edifice, pass'd by St. *James's* Gate, who for a while put up with that little Respect which was paid to him, hoping that when the said Church was built, they wou'd think of a better Lodging for him. As he saw in Proces of Time, that the *Romans* did not think of him, he resolv'd to take what they wou'd not give him; and one Day perceiving two Pillars of marble Granite, which two Carts were carrying to St. *Peter's* Church, he liked them so well that he form'd a Design to make them his own. He waited till they came near his Gate, and then, by his Almighty Power, he depriv'd the Horses of their Strength, so that they were not able to draw their Burden. The Carter, who knew nothing of St. *James's* Contrivance, smack'd his Whip, and swore bitterly, but all wou'd not avail to make the dumb Creatures stir; so that 'twas suppos'd they were

were quite tir'd, and six more Horses put to; but 'twas never the better. At last, they put a hundred to each Cart, yet they cou'd not stir a foot forward, till somebody of more Sense than the rest, discover'd St. James's Design, and said they must be drawn to the Gate of his Church. To make the Miracle the more evident, they left but two Horses in each Cart, which went a full Trot, and as if they had no Load, to carry the Pillars, which James had a fancy for, to his Chapel; which was soon after pull'd down and a Temple built, wherein they were plac'd: And in memory of this Miracle, the People gave it the Name of St. James's *Shake-Horse* *.

Pr'ythee, send me word if thou feest or hearest of any thing near so absurd as this in *France*. How happy is it for us, dear *Monceca*, that we were born *Jews*! Such Chimæras never find room in our Imagination; and under what Mask soever Imposture and Ridicule appear before us, we never adopt them for Miracles.

Fare thee well, and may the God of *Israel* crown thee with Wealth and Abundance.

* There's not a Man in *Rome* but affirms this Fact to be true, and in memory of the pretended Miracle the Church retains the Name of *Chiesa di San Giacomo Scoffa-Cavallo*, i. e. St. James's *Shake-Horse*.



LETTER VII.

AARON MONCECA to JACOB BRITO.

Dear Jacob,

Paris —

I Receiv'd thy Letter, and congratulate thee on being more punctual in thy Answers than *Isaac Onis*, from whom I have not yet had a Line. I doubt not, but thou art as much astonish'd at what thou seest at *Rome*, as I am at what I find at *Paris*. All things that occur to our View were unknown to us, so that it seems as if we were transported into a new World. Yet thou ought'st not to be so much astonish'd as I. Thy Father was a *Genoese*, thou wast bred up in the Country of the *Nazarenes* till thou wast ten Years of Age; and tho' thou then went'st to *Constantinople*, and art but just come away from thence, to be sure, thou hast a confus'd Idea of what thou sawest in thy Childhood.

I was pleas'd to read thy Account of the Superstition of the People at *Rome*. We have convincing Proofs every Day of the Excesses into which Men are liable to be drawn by it. At the very Juncture I am writing this to thee, there are, perhaps, two thousand People at *Paris* that are attack'd with Vapours, as if they were possest'd with the Devil; and yet the extravagant and mad Things they do, pass for Miracles. The Affair, which has turn'd the Brains of all those People, is no less than an Order from the sovereign Pontiff. The Fact is this:

No doubt thou hast heard People talk, at *Rome*, of a certain Constitution, which makes a very great

D

Noise

Noise in *France*. A certain Priest *, that adher'd to the Opposers of that Constitution in this Kingdom, died some Years ago ; who, in his Life-time, was unknown to the whole World ; but after his Death had a Fame that was astonishing. Some of the Opponents of the Constitution endeavour'd to procure him one of those Commissions, of which thou dost say the Pope is the sole Dispenser, and by which a Man is acknowledg'd to be a Lord of the Court of Heaven. As they did not expect that the sovereign Pontiff wou'd consent to it, they resolv'd to make him the Author of such Great Things, that the People shou'd grant him the said Dignity, without the Pontiff's Consent. They had recourse to a Miracle, which is the Grand Method to strike the Imagination ; and in Matters wherein they had a mind that the Virtue of their departed Brother shou'd operate, they diffus'd a Gaiety, and adorn'd them with the Pomp of Shew. They thought that while they amus'd the People with delightful Objects, their Miracles wou'd make a greater Impression than if they happen'd singly ; and therefore resolv'd to give their New Saint the Power of curing those that resorted to him by Songs and Dances. A certain Abbé †, after having study'd a good while in private, was the first that open'd the Exercise. He danc'd a Dance upon the Tomb of this Priest, in which he gave a Bound, call'd, *The Carp's Leap*, or, *Top-over-Tail* ; which he perform'd to Perfection, and to the prodigious Satisfaction of the Public. He had one Leg shorter than the other by fourteen Inches, and pretended that every three Months it lengthen'd the twelfth part of an Inch. A Mathematician,

* Monsieur *Paris*. He was only a Deacon.

† The Convulsions of the Abbé *Becheran*, upon the Tomb of the Abbé *Paris*.

who computed the time when he wou'd be perfectly cured, reckon'd it wou'd take up fifty-five Years Capers. Many People were charm'd with a Representation of this Trifle; they went thither to see it, and afterwards several try'd to dance themselves, so that there were few Companies of Rope-Dancers so compleat. Those of the contrary Party wou'd fain have engag'd the *French* and *Italian* Comedians, to petition the Parliament to put a stop to an Entertainment which did them a Prejudice: But whether the Comedians were brib'd, or whether they were not willing to hinder their Brethren from gaining their Livelihood, they kept Silence.

Mean time, these Dancing-bouts displeas'd the King, who caus'd * the Gate of their Hall to be wall'd up, and forbad them to continue their Exercises upon grievous Penalties. Being no longer allow'd to frisk it in public, they did it privately at their own Hous-es. But as the Number of those Dancers was very much increas'd, and as their Capers, accompany'd with barbarous Tunes, sung by coarse Voices, made a frightful Noise, some Prelates, who had late up pretty late, being thereby awaken'd out of their Sleep too soon in the Morning, obtain'd an Order for arresting such as were in their Quarters, and for committing them Prisoners to the Castle of *Vincennes*; where there were near three hundred confin'd. Judge what a fine Noise they must make when they began their Cross-Capers. Some, that were quite sick of their Confinement, promis'd to renounce Dancing and Music for good-and-all, and were restor'd to their Liberty. Others were detain'd, and continu'd their Exercises. Besides those, there are others above two Miles from *Paris*, who have not been arrested.

* The Church-yard, in which was the Tomb of their pretended Saint.

You must own, my dear *Brito*, that they who thus deceive a People, so easy to be seduc'd, deserve severe Chastisement. I admire the Clemency of the King of *France*. Such Tumblers at *Constantinople*, wou'd soon have been impal'd alive; or wou'd have been for ever disabled from cutting Capers. It seems to be the Destiny of this People, to be incessantly bubbled by the Invention of turbulent Spirits. They run into every Snare that is laid for them, and are no sooner out of one but are intangled in another.

A Friend of mine told me a pleasant Story of the Simplicity of a Woman, which he saw with his own Eyes. In a certain Town of the *Franche Comté**, a Priest had been interr'd †, who was Member of a Society that was diametrically opposite to the Dancers I have been talking of. He was accus'd, whilst living, of having put the Devil in Possession of a Woman, that he might have the Opportunity of debauching her. The Affair being carried before a sovereign Tribunal, he was acquitted. His Enemies said, that his Deliverance out of that Scrape was owing to a certain Protection; tho', for my own part, I will confess to thee, that after having inquir'd into the Fact, I thought it was a Trick which was play'd him by the Caperers, to whom he was a declar'd Enemy. His Brethren, who were all extremely concern'd for the Noise which this Trial made, in order to repair, after his Death, the Wrong which he had done them in his Life-time, resolved to procure for him a Writ of Canonization, of the first Class; and this it was easy for them to obtain, by their Interest with the sovereign Pontiff; but such was the Prejudice entertain'd to his Disadvantage, that nothing less than a Miracle cou'd remove it.

* *Dole.*

† Father *Girard*, a Jesuit.

A Woman, who had lost her Sight for several Months, caus'd Wax-tapers and Incense to be burnt, to the Honour of all the Saints of Paradise. Yet not one of them was complaisant enough to offer to restore it to her; they were all deaf to her Prayers, and the good Woman lost both her Time and her Presents. Her Director advised her to perform a Noveau, or nine Days Devotion, at the Tomb of the deceased Father, who, by the Persecutions which he had suffer'd, deserv'd to be in the first Class of the Blessed in Heaven. The blind Lady consented to it, and indeed she wou'd have offer'd Vows to *Mahomet*, if she thought she cou'd have had Relief upon the ninth Day. As she was saying her Prayers at the Tomb of this Demi-Saint *, the Sun directed its Rays upon her Eyes thro' one of the Church-Windows: As she always perceiv'd a Glimmering of Light at Noon-day, tho' without distinguishing any Object, those Sun-Beams being render'd brighter by the Reflection of the Glass, discover'd a pale sort of Light to her, which so surpriz'd her that she cry'd out, *she cou'd see*; and in the first Start of her Joy, making three or four hasty Steps, without being led, she ran with her Head full-butt against a Pillar, and got a Bump in her Forehead, which gave a great Shock to the new Saint's Reputation, and was a Remora to the Dispatch of the Writ that was to be granted to him for Canonization. At the same time this Adventure has very much tarnish'd the Credit of certain little Shreds of Stuff, which the People cut off from his Gown when he was buried, and which they kept very choice †.

* It is in a Chapel near a Window.

† When Father *Girard* was interr'd at *Dole*, the Populace cut off Pieces of his Robe to preserve as Reliques.

I question, my dear *Brito*, whether Superstition rises to a higher Pitch in the Country which thou inhabiteſt. Doſt not thou think that the Caperers at *Paris* are a proper Parallel for the Adventure of *St. James Shake-Horſe?* The Populace every where are alike credulous. Thou art not a Stranger to the fervile Respect the *Mahometans* pay to their Santons and their Derviſes. And we ourſelves, I muſt own to thee, do ſometimes give too blindly into the No-tions of our Rabbies. I will, ſome Day or other, let thee know what I think of this Matter.

Fare thee well, and may the God of our Fathers heap his Riches on thee in abundance.



LETTER VIII.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS,
a Rabbi at Constantinople.

Paris —

I Wonder every Day at the great Power of the King of *France*, and can no longer question the Truth of what I heard from ſome Merchants at *Pera*; tho' I did not eaſily give Credit to what they faid, when they aſſur'd me that their Prince was in a Condition to execute Undertakings, which the Grand Signior wou'd not dare to think of. His Grandeur is principally owing to three Things, *viz.* the Affection of his Subjects; the Abaſement of the Great Men, whom the Kings his Predeceſſors have humbled and impoverty'd; and the happy Si-tuation of his Provinces, which are vaſtly populous. As I was boasting of the flouriſhing State of this Kingdom, to the Chevalier *de Maisin*; You only ſee, faid

said he, *the Ruins of our Grandeur. We have undone ourselves; and our intestine Divisions have avail'd more to that End than all the Efforts of our Enemies.*

‘ The People having been divided, continued he, ‘ for near two hundred Years, about some Points ‘ of Religion, our Divines split into Parties; the ‘ Court declaring for the one, and a part of the ‘ common People and of the Nobility for the other. ‘ For a while there was nothing more than bare ‘ Disputation, but by degrees Hatred and Jealousy ‘ interfer'd in the Affair: The Court did not like ‘ that there shou'd be different Sentiments in the ‘ Nation from their own, and therefore the King ‘ laid his Command on his Subjects to conform; ‘ but we have too often seen, by fatal Conse- ‘ quences, that there's nothing so dangerous as put- ‘ ting a Force upon Conscience. Those of the ‘ French, who were call'd Innovators, refus'd to sub- ‘ mit, and pleaded, that notwithstanding the Alle- ‘ giance which they ow'd to their Prince, they were ‘ not therefore to fail in the principal Articles of ‘ their Religion. This Refusal of theirs gave their ‘ Adversaries a Handle to persecute them. A great ‘ Number was put to Death. Several honest Men ‘ were even burnt; and what is surprizing, is, that ‘ the Persecution increas'd the Number of the Inno- ‘ vators instead of diminishing them; so that their ‘ Party grew formidable, being augmented and ren- ‘ der'd considerable by some Princes of the Blood, ‘ who became their Leaders; and during the Reigns ‘ of two or three Kings, we tore one another to ‘ pieces. In fine, the Court-Party prevailing, the ‘ Innovators were banish'd the Kingdom. The ‘ Government chose rather to lose a fourth part of ‘ their Subjects, and to see their Gold and Manu- ‘ factures carry'd into foreign Countries, than suffer

the People to pray to God in the *French Language*,
or to eat Mutton upon a *Friday*. After that Ba-
nishment a Union was expected, but scarce were
those Citizens proscribed than others were look'd
upon as a fresh Sett of Innovators. Of these
there's a great Number; and if the same Remedy
was to be made use of as was employ'd to destroy
the former, the Kingdom wou'd soon be like a
Man, whom too frequent Blood-letting had thrown
into a Consumption.'

Does it not look, my dear *Isaac*, as if the God
of our Fathers takes care to revenge our Cause on
the *Nazarenes* and Infidels. Tho' he suffers us to
be in a State of Captivity, and that we shou'd bear
the Yoke of those haughty Tyrants, he scatters a
Spirit of Perverseness and Delusion among them, to
shew us by their Errors the Truth of that Law which
God himself gave to *Moses*.

I know not whether thou did'st ever reflect on the
Persecution which the *Nazarenes* suffer from one
another. For my part, I always consider'd it as a
palpable Instance of God's Chastisement of them,
for the Outrages they have been guilty of against us.
That Inquisition which thirsteth after the Blood of
Israel, and the Horrors of which have even mov'd
the Pity of our cruellest Enemies, cost *Spain* the
United Provinces, which revolted, and received our
Brethren into their Bosom, gave them Shelter, and
are become the Depositaries of the Riches of the
Universe, and the Guardians of oppressed Liberty.

Compare, dear *Isaac*, the Carriage of the People
of God with that of the *Nazarenes*. When the
Ten Tribes separated, we did what we cou'd to re-
duce them into the right Way; but did we, under
feign'd Promises, bring them into the Temple to be
offer'd up there as Victims? Did a Levite ever
think that the Death of any Sadducee wou'd advance
him.

him to a High Priest? Does God require that we shou'd spill the Blood of our Brethren? Nay, does he not expressly forbid it in the very Terms of the Commandment of his Law?

I have observ'd, that among the Infidels they are quite mad to make Proselytes. The *Mahometans* and *Nazarenes* put all Methods in Practice for this End; and being discourag'd at their ill Success amongst us, after having made use of Threats, Punishments, and Promises to no purpose, they have turn'd their Arms one against another.

The *Nazarenes* have religious Soldiers *, who make a solemn Vow to sacrifice as many *Turks* as they possibly can, for the Glory of God; and the latter, in revenge, have made it an Article of their Law, to pay them in the same Coin. Is not that a pitiful way of enlightening the Mind and the Heart? Is not that a merry sort of Faith which is founded upon Fear, where a Man only believes because he is afraid not to believe? The smallest Difficulty, the most trifling Dispute, arms those Infidels one against another. They cut one another's Throats, and murder one another for the least Matter in Dispute; and no sooner is one Point decided, but another is trump'd up. The *Greeks* at *Constantinople* hate the *Romans* worse than they do the *Mahometans*; and there is not a Merchant at *Pera*, but had rather be a *Turk* than what he calls a *Schismatic*. Thou knowest the Antipathy between the *Turks* and *Perians*, and the Division into the Sects of *Omar* and *Aly*.

I look upon *Mahometism* and *Nazarenism* as two great Towers like that of *Babel*, which are continually producing a Medley of confounded Disputed and Ideas.

* The Knights of *Malta*.

The *Nazarenes* object that as a Reproach to us, which is the Glory of our holy Law ; they pretend that our Dispersion upon the Face of the Earth is the Mark of Reprobation : *But that Unity of Faith and Belief* * which we have preserv'd ; that Simplicity in the essential Articles of our Religion, which neither Time, nor Misfortune, nor the Difference of Climates cou'd ever alter, are they not evident Proofs of the Majesty and Truth of our holy Law ? Confusion, Disorder, and Change are the Lot of Human Inventions, and Stability and Confidence the Marks of the Finger of God.

Write to me, dear *Isaac*, if thou think'st my Reflections just. I am in a Country where I dare not speak what I think, any farther than may serve to clear my Doubts ; nor ask Questions more than may be excusable from the Curiosity natural to Foreigners.

I was yesterday at the Interment of a *Nazarene*. The Ceremonies appear'd to me as strange as those which I had seen in their Church before. A great Number of Monks walk'd two and two in the Streets, singing some doleful Ditty : Among those Fryars, there were some clad in several Fashions, and different Colours. Some were dress'd in grey, wore a long Beard, and had no Stocking or Shoe, but wooden Sandals. Others wore black and white, without any Beard at all. Some had a greenish Habit. All these Fryars form'd several different Companies, and were divided according to their Garbs. At the Head of every Company a Stan-

* By the Term, *Unity of Faith and Belief*, *Aaron Moncea* only means the principal Articles of the *Jewish* Doctrine ; and therefore does not at all attend to the Difference of Sentiments between the *German*, *Portuguese*, *Asiatic*, and *African Jews*.

dard was borne, in Form of a Cross, very much resembling the Ensigns of the Bashas, only they had no Horse-Tail hanging to their Staves. Those first Priests, who form'd as it were the Van-guard, were follow'd by others, cover'd with a sort of Mantles, very much like the Cloaks of the Shepherds of *Arabia*; and certain Men held up one End of their Robe. They had each a long Flambeau in their Hands; and you might have taken these for Pikemen, who constituted the Body of the Army. They form'd a square Battallion, as it were, round the dead Man, who was carried on the Shoulders of four Persons. The Rear-Guard, which closed the March, was a Croud of People dress'd in Black, with a Man stalking at the Head of 'em, cover'd all over with black Crape. Curiosity tempting me to see the End of a Ceremony so extraordinary, I follow'd the Funeral Convoy; which was no sooner arrived in the Church, but the dead Body was plac'd in the midst of several flaming Torches, and surrounded by Priests, who took their leave of it, by singing certain Airs and Songs. I was too far off to distinguish what they said to the Corpse, but it seem'd to me as if they wish'd it abundance of Peace, Tranquility, and a perfect Preservation of Sight *. Before the Deceased was let down into the Vault, they had a mind to see, by way of Precaution, if he was not in a Swoon only; for which end, a young Man brought a Pot full of Water †, and evry one sprinkled it on his Face. As he gave no Sign of Life, he was shut

* Aaron Monceca alludes to those Words in the Office of the Dead, *Dona eis Requiem, & Lux perpetua luceat eis*, i. e. Give them Rest, and let Light everlasting shine upon them.

† Holy Water, which the Priests sprinkle upon the dead Bodies, to keep off evil Spirits.

into a Tomb; after which another little Air was sung at his Grave, by way of taking the last Farewell of him. I cou'd not guesse at the Reason of this Ceremony. I wou'd fain know, methinks, whether the *Nazarenes* believe that the Dead in the other World are metamorphos'd into little Children, and to be hush'd to Sleep by Lullabies.

We are charg'd with having too many Ceremonies in our Religion. Can there be any more ridiculous, or in greater Number than there are among the *Nazarenes*? What must a living Person think to see People singing at the Grave of the Dead? I know no greater Folly, except it be that of dancing at it.

Farewell, dear *Isaac*, and thank God for having reveal'd his Law to thee.



LETTER IX.

**I S A A C O N I S, a Rabbi, at Constantinople,
to A A R O N M O N C E C A.**

Constantinople —

BY the Captain of a Ship that arriv'd yesterday in this Port, I have just receiv'd four of thy Letters. 'Tis like they were stopp'd at *Marseilles*, but our Correspondent has sent them all by the same Vessel. I make no doubt of thy Surprize at the Novelties thou hast seen. The first time that I set out from *Constantinople* for *Vienna*, I was in the same Case as thou art. Being bred up to the *Levantine* Manners and Customs, I thought every thing extraordinary that did not resemble them. I laugh'd.

laugh'd heartily at thy Mistake about the Singers at the Opera, and thy Confusion at the Sermon. I shew'd thy Letters to *Osman Basha* *, who for some Days past has been in this Country. He thought thee very right in thy Judgment, as to the State of the Sciences in *France*. Thy Reflections upon our Religion occasion'd a smart and merry Dispute between his Secretary and me. He is a young Man, who has been about three Years a *Mahometan*. He was one while a Monk ; after which, being tir'd of the *Nazarene* Religion, he turn'd *Turk*. The Basha seeing him, and finding him to be a Man of some Genius, took him into his Service. He wou'd fain have prov'd to me, that the *Mahometan* was the true Religion ; that it contain'd *Judaism* refin'd, such as it was at the Time that God gave the Tables to *Moses*. I was surpriz'd to see him so zealous for *Mahomet*. I thought that he was as bad a *Turk* as he was a *Nazarene*. The Arguments he made use of in the Disputation, were such an Amusement to *Osman*, that he order'd him to make a Summary of them, that he might examine the same at his Leisure ; and I herewith send thee a Copy of it, as it was drawn up by the Secretary ; and setting aside all Prejudice, pray send me word what thou think'it of it.

*The Sentiments of Haly, Secretary to Osman Basha,
formerly Count de Bonneval.*

• We Mussulmen have the same Ceremonies and
• the same Faith as you Jews in all Articles of Im-
• portance. One God alone, the Immortality of the
• Soul, the Punishment of the Wicked, the Reward
• of the Righteous, the Circumcision, the Abhor-
• rence of Images, the Observation of the Sabbath-
• Day ; and our Mosques as well as your Synagogues

* *The Count de Bonneval.*

are

‘ are not polluted with Idols. When we fast, we
 ‘ don’t eat, any more than you, till after Sun-set. We
 ‘ have a Respect for the Memory of *Moses*, and the
 ‘ Prophets. We look with Veneration upon the
 ‘ City of *Jerusalem*. We abstain from prohibited
 ‘ Meats. This is in all Points antient *Judaism* ;
 ‘ this is the Faith of *Israel* in its greatest Lustre,
 ‘ and such as subsisted in the Time of *David*.

‘ Let us now examine who have most alter’d it,
 ‘ and added to it, whether we or you.

‘ One of the two things which you reproach’d us
 ‘ for, consists in the Worship we pay to the *Messiah* *.
 ‘ But why are not you willing that we should ac-
 ‘ knowledge he is come into the World, when there
 ‘ are so many evident Proofs of it ? How do you
 ‘ settle your eternal Expectation of him with the
 ‘ Weeks of *Daniel*? You have lost your Reckon-
 ‘ ing ; and tir’d as you are with making imperfect
 ‘ Calculations, you have rather chose to say that ’twas
 ‘ a Mystery you wou’d hearken to no longer. You
 ‘ get off much in the same manner as to the Ex-
 ‘ planation of that Prophecy, wherein ’tis so clearly
 ‘ said, that the Sceptre shall not depart from the
 ‘ House of *Judah* till the Arrival of him that is to
 ‘ come. I know you argue that the Prophecy does
 ‘ not mean a Sceptre, but that the Word there us’d
 ‘ signifies a *Rod of Tribulation* ; and by the Help
 ‘ of a forc’d Turn, which you give to this Passage,
 ‘ you wou’d make it serve your Purpose. Yet, not-
 ‘ withstanding all the Endeavours of your Rabbies.
 ‘ to throw a Cloud over the Prophets, you know
 ‘ the Story of one of your most famous Doctors.
 ‘ When he was dying he sent for his Family, and as
 ‘ they were rang’d about his Bed, he said to them,
 ‘ *I am afraid that Jesus of Nazareth, whom our*

* The Turks look upon the *Messiah* as a great Prophet ; and also have a great Veneration for the Apostles.

• Fathers crucify'd, is the Messiah. He died soon
• after, and all their Endeavours to conceal this Rab-
• bi's Doubts from the Public were to no purpose.

• But after all, supposing for once that we are
• mistaken in thinking that the *Messiah* is arriv'd,
• let us see, whether our Deviation from true Ju-
• daism in any material Article, is the Consequence
• of our holding that Opinion. Not at all, for we
• still believe in the same Ceremonies, the same
• fundamental Points which fix'd the Law of *Israel*,
• when *Jerusalem* was in its Glory. What Harm
• can it be to honour a Prophet, a great Man, a
• Legislator, whose Morals are so beautiful, and so
• conducive to the Peace and Tranquility of Society?
• If he has taught us to make any Addition to an-
• tient Judaism, they are Sentiments so refin'd that
• 'tis plain they come from Heaven; and if *Moses*
• did not inspire the antient Jews with it, 'twas be-
• cause he knew that their Hearts were too much
• harden'd to imbibe them. We have therefore
• made no other Changes in the ancient Religion
• than refining the moral Part, and rendring to the
• Preacher of it to us the Glory which was due to
• him. We have not carried Matters to an Extre-
• mity as the Christians, and whereas they are en-
• tirely departed from Judaism, we have done no-
• thing more than refin'd it.

• You reproach us also with the profound Vene-
• ration we have for *Mahomet*. Why may not we
• be allowed to honour the Ambassador of God,
• the Person who, after *Moses* and *Jesus*, came to
• bring Light upon the Earth, and to compleat the
• Law of God, of whom he is the Favourite?

• Let us now see if you have not made Altera-
• tions that are more considerable. Since your Dis-
• persion you have fail'd in the most necessary Points
• of the Law. You have left off Circumcision in
• Spain; and yet notwithstanding the Danger of it,
• nothing

nothing could oblige you to discontinue another material Ceremony. One while you bought and sacrific'd Infants in *France*; and, contrary to the Will of God, you sprinkled the Altars which you erected to him with human Blood, tho' you were expressly forbid to sacrifice out of *Jerusalem*. I do not mention all the idle Dreams of your Doctors. Where have you found in the ancient Books, that you were forbid to cut Bread with certain Knives, and that you were not allowed to drink the Wine of Grapes, which yourselves had not pres'd. In what part of *Genesis*, *Deuteronomy*, or the Psalms of *David*, have you read that wicked Principle, that it is an Article of Religion to deceive all those that are not of yours? I know that you don't own publicly that you entertain those Sentiments. The Reason of it is evident, People would be much more upon their Guard, and you would find it a hard matter to perform the Functions of your new *Judaism*. Agree then, that you have only the Name of the antient *Jews*, and that the Musfulmen have the Religion.

'Twill be easy for thee, my dear *Moncea*, to discover the weak side of this Writing, and the Sophistry with which it abounds. I will confess to thee that I have found out the Whim of it. Many Persons have reproach'd us with being in an Error, but no body ever attempted to prove to us that the *Mahometans* were true *Jews* under a different Name.

I wish that so singular an Opinion may be as acceptable to thee as thy Letters are to me, which put me in mind of every thing that I saw in *Germany*; where I met with all the Characters thou seest in *Paris*, such as *Petits Maitres*, gay Ladies, hypocritical Monks, Knaves, &c.

If one takes a general View of Mankind, we may perceive a very great Resemblance betwixt one Nation,

Nation and another. The Difference of Climate does not change their Hearts, they dress after the Fashion of the Country, and that's all. People are in love at *Constantinople* as much as at *Paris*. The *Turks* are as much addicted to Gallantry as the *Parisians*; but 'tis in a different Taste. Here Silence is the Life and Soul of an Intrigue; the least Indiscretion hazards all: Necessity, and not Inclination, forces a Lover to be silent. A different Custom excuses a *Frenchman* from so many Precautions: and if he is not so very careful of concealing the Favours of his Mistress, 'tis because he has not so much to fear. A *Turk* wou'd perhaps be altogether as indiscreet, if his Interest did not oblige him to the contrary. Those Airs of the *Petits Maitres*, their affected Fashions and Manners, are not unknown in *Turky*. They appear under other Forms, yet are the same. The Plumes, the lac'd Clothes, the Spying or Ogling Glasses, the Canes, the Snuff-boxes, are transform'd here into the Habit of the *Chelibi* *, into a Turban trimm'd with fine Muslin, into a Box of Perfumes, into a Pocket-Book for writing down Love-Verses, and into Pipes of a very gay Taste.

In all Countries the Foible of the Women is Dress. The Desire of pleasing a Lover who has won their Hearts, and their Boldness in leaving no Stone unturned till they have succeeded, is a Passion which is natural to them. All the Difference is how they shall come at their Point. In *France* and in *Germany* a Chambermaid deceives the Husband, while she carries Letters and does Service to the Mistress. An Eunuch acts the very same part here. When the *Frenchman* perceives it, he laughs at it, or bears it with Patience. The *Mahometan* raves

* *Chelibi*, a young *Turkish* Nobleman.

and storms, but his Passion makes no Alteration in his Fate. Whether he bears it peaceably or not, he must submit to it. The Monks too, at whose Actions thou art amaz'd, may be match'd here for their Avarice, their Knavery, their Hypocrisy, their Sloth, and their Unprofitableness to the Common-Weal. All is alike to a *Nazarene* Fryar and a *Mahometan* Dervise.

Don't complain if thou dost not receive my Letters punctually : for the few Ships that sail from hence put it out of my power to be regular in that respect.



LETTER X.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS
a Rabbi, at Constantinople.

Paris —

ABUNDANCE of grotesque Figures and Idols are carry'd about the Streets here with great Ceremony, which they call the *Shrines of Saints*. They are convoy'd in the same manner as I acquainted thee, the Dead were carry'd to their Graves ; and except their Vestments, which are not black, there is no Difference. These Pagods have their particular Days, mark'd in the Course of the Year, for their Procession. The one don't incroach upon the Rights of another ; and be an Idol ever so impatient to take the Air, and visit the Streets, it must stay till its Festival comes. 'Till then 'tis carefully laid up, and never stirs out of its Case without the Leave of the Church-Wardens. Every one of these Shrines has its particular Province in the Government of Nature. One commands the Winds, another the Seas, another presides over the Fruits of the Earth. One

of

of the most considerable is that which has the Power of bringing down Rain, upon which account 'tis the first in Rank, and has the Prerogative of being carry'd abroad oftner than the others. There are many others, whose Power is more circumscrib'd. These preside over the Eye-sight, the Tooth-ach, the Gout, the Pestilence, Voyages, Enterprizes, Trade, the Discovery of Things lost; and have the same Attributes as the Household Gods of the Ancients that were called *Lares* or *Penates*. The People's firm Belief in the Power of these Shrines, is like to occasion a new System in natural Philosophy; a Physician having by the Help of those Shrines found out a Method for the easy Explanation of all the Secrets of Nature; and as this Philosophy is perfectly agreeable to the Monks, 'tis probable they will do every thing in their Power to bring it into vogue.

I have formerly acquainted you of several Things relating to the learned Men of this Country, tho' I could not then enter into Particulars: but having since made an acquaintance with some of 'em, am now better qualify'd to satisfy you upon that Head.

The learned Men of *Paris* may be distinguish'd, as the *Greeks* divided their Deities, into Gods and Demi-Gods. The Sciolists, or Smatterers in Knowledge, swarm in *France*. Every body here affects to be witty; 'tis the Foible of the Nation, insomuch that they had rather be reckon'd Knaves than Block-heads; and the Man who does not value any Censure on the account of the Scandalousness of his Behaviour, would be extremely sorry if he be not thought capable of guessing at the *Ænigma's* in the *Mercure Galant*, and composing a Madrigal.

The Women too affect to be sovereign Judges of the Merit of Compositions, and what is somewhat singular, their Decisions are often preferable to those of the

the Men. They have a certain natural Delicacy, which not being deprav'd by ill-digested Studies, renders their Taste much nicer and more solid than that of the Sciolists. The superior Genius's that liv'd in the Reign of *Lewis XIV.* have not had their Places supply'd for these fifteen or twenty Years past; and it seems as if Nature chose that Period to form a Number of great Men in the Arts and Sciences, that every thing might be answerable at the same time to the Greatness of that Monarch.

Yet there are still several illustrious Men, whom we ought in Justice to place in the first Rank. The oldest of them all * is an excellent Philosopher, a good Poet in his youthful Days, an able Critic, and a great Natural Philosopher in his riper Age. Would'st thou believe, that a Man endow'd with such uncommon Talents should be so vain or so weak as to take a wrong Turn at last? He abandon'd his Brethren the Men of Learning, and set up for the Head or Patron of the Pigmies and Novices of *Parnassus*. He prostituted his learned Pen to defend their Reveries, and the Public was surpriz'd to see such a Man as he defending so bad a Cause. The Point in question was to prove the Superiority of the Moderns over the Antients. As chimerical as this Enterprize was, perhaps their Equality might be demonstrated, if this Subject was treated with the Exactness and Impartiality that it requires. But this ridiculous Dispute was carry'd to such a Height, as to affirm that *Homer* was a Dotard, *Demosthenes* a Brawler, *Virgil* a very ordinary Poet; they wanted to be taught how to speak their own Language. They are reproach'd with low Expressions, ignoble Terms; and a Man born upon the Banks of the *Seine*, three thousand Years after the Death of *Homer*, pretended to tell him the Choice of Words, and the

* *Fontenelle.*

the Dignity of the *Greek Phrases*. What was pretty singular in this Dispute was the Difference betwixt the Adversaries. All the Men of true Learning, all the Genius's of the first Class, were for the Party of the Antients; they own'd their Obligations for what they knew, to the reading of their Works, and said that their Opponents were the Scandal of Literature, and the very Excrement of the *Belles Lettres*. Consequently they were soon reduc'd to Silence, and in their Confusion they apply'd themselves to the learned Man of whom I made mention to thee. They offer'd to own him for their Master. He was tickled with the pleasing Idea of being the Head of a Party, and wrote very bad Things with a great deal of Wit. In all probability he will soon condemn them; for the *Nazarenes* are oblig'd upon their Death-Bed to confess the Lyes they have told in their Life-time; and as he is far advanc'd in Years, I fancy it will not be long before he makes such an authentic Reparation to the good Writings that he has criticis'd, as will serve to wipe out the only Stain with which his Honour has been tarnish'd.

The Custom of the *Nazarenes* to confess all their Actions to their Priests, makes them Masters of the Secrets of all Families. The sovereign Pontiff, while he sits on his Throne in the middle of the City of *Rome*, may know the very Thoughts not only of an *European* and an *African* but an *Indian Nazarene*. If he does not care to know Particulars, 'tis always in his Power to know them whenever he desires it; and to give a perpetual Proof of the Authority he has of reading in People's Hearts, he reserves to himself the Cognizance of certain Crimes throughout Christendom, of which he alone has the Power of granting Pardon. To strike a Fryar, to write against him, &c. These are Crimes which he alone can absolve. If I was a *Nazarene*, the

Letter I write to thee wou'd oblige me to take the Tour of *Italy*; but had I murder'd half a dozen Men, and robb'd half a score Families, I shou'd be excus'd, by confessing it to the first Monk I met with, and fully absolv'd on the Deposit of some Alms for the use of him, or his Convent. Was I very rich, perhaps I might be oblig'd to make some pious Foundation; But then I should have the Remainder of my Absolution, and might make use of the Cudgel into the bargain, without its being charg'd to my Account, the first time that I return'd to make a Report of it.

This Absolution, of which the Priests are the sole Depositaries, is to them as valuable as if they had the Mines of *Peru* and *Potosi*. They look upon it as Land, the Cultivation of which, maintains them; they have settled the Revenues of it at three different Payments, which they demand on the Days of their three chief Festivals; and by a special Favour they have granted to the young Lords and Ladies of the Court the Privilege of paying it at once, from which nothing however can excuse them. Yet there are many People who cheat the Priests of their Duties. There was one Man who in the very *articulo mortis*, confess'd that he had been a Smuggler this way for twenty or thirty Years past. The Men of Dress, and of Learning, are very apt to cheat in this respect. There are many of the former who never pay but in Extremity, when they are oblig'd to it by Distempers, Prejudices and Fear; and among the latter, several die without paying their Debts. The Monks also take care to declaim against such Abuse; and to remedy it as far as in their power, they have made a Contract with the Fallen Angels; by which the latter oblige themselves to lay hold on all such as die without having paid the Duties. The Monks have

have made this Contract public, and very often take care to renew the Memory of it. This Alliance which they have contracted with the infernal Spirits, has prov'd so astonishing to some *Nazarenes*, that they cou'd not find in their Hearts to die, tho' they had paid the Duties. They still fear'd that the Devils would play some Tricks with them. To allay their Fears, some *Nazarene* Doctors invented a sort of Receipt to serve them as a Passport, and they laid a small Duty upon this Acquittance, which increased their Revenues, by means of the Precaution taken by many People to provide themselves therewith, before their Departure to the other World. These Passports put me in mind of a certain Sentence of the Alcoran, which some superstitious *Turks* cause to be laid in the Grave with them, not doubting but their Prophet will think the better of them for so pious an Action.

What Error, dear *Isaac*, what Blindness is here! We shall have no safe Conduct after we die but our good Deeds: 'Tis a pure Conscience that gives us a noble Assurance, when we are ready to undertake this Voyage. When a Man has liv'd innocent, what need he fear Death, which puts an end to all our Troubles; whereas here we are unfortunate Pilgrims, the Duples of Passions, and a Prey to all the Rigours of Fortune that can give us Vexation? If Heaven had not commanded us not to attempt our own Lives, I shou'd approve of the Custom observ'd in certain Towns in the time of *Pompey*, when a Man who was very unfortunate was allow'd to demand Poison, which was kept for that Purpose in the Republic, and of which the Magistrates were the wise Dispensers, and judg'd whether the Misfortunes complain'd of, were so violent as to deserve the public Remedy. But how could their Judgments be just? Man only sees thro' the Veil

of his Passions, and is by them always determin'd. An unfortunate Lover would say, that he ought to have all the Poison, that was ready to die for the Loss of a Mistress. A Gamester wou'd think that he ought rather to have the Dose that had lost his Money. An ambitious Person wou'd grant it with more Pleasure to a disgrac'd Courtier. And I am of opinion, that those Judges, when they were not sensible of the same Passions as he who presented his Petition, granted it to him oftner out of pure Favour than from a real Persuasion that he wanted it.

The Post is just going off, and I conclude my Letter. Take care of thy Health, dear *Isaac*, and prosper every day more and more.



LETTER XI.

JACOB BRITO to AARON MONCECA.

Rome—

I Still continue to examine the Beauties of *Rome*, and am equally pleas'd and astonish'd to see the Ruins of the Grandeur of those famous *Romans*. I went yesterday to see the Capitol. On the Ruins of that ancient Pile they have built a modern Palace, of which *Michael Angelo* the famous Architect gave the Model. After having examin'd all the Curiosities of it, a wide Field open'd to my Reflections. I said to myself, *If Marius, Sylla, Cæsar, Sertorius and Pompey, were but to return to the World, and to be carried to Rome, without knowing before-hand the Alterations it had undergone, how greatly would they be surpriz'd!* They wou'd think to take their Places in the Capitol, and wou'd see them fill'd by a dozen

a dozen of Lords. They wou'd find the old Senators metamorphos'd into Abbés, and the Order of Knights chang'd into a Swarm of Monks. Instead of the Lictors and Fasces that preceded and follow'd the *Roman Consuls*, they would see a Prelate guarded by his Tipstaves, or else some Cardinal going abroad in *Fioco*, as they call it, or in State. *What are become of the Legions*, they would say, *are they encamp'd near Rome?* They would go to the Field of *Mars*, and find nothing there but Brambles and Serpents. *O ye Romans*, they wou'd cry, *what is become of your Love of Glory?* *What have you done with that martial Ardour which render'd you the Masters of the World?* At these Questions the People wou'd laugh heartily. If they wanted to visit the Arsenals, to see the Condition of the Arms, and the Expence which the Republic is capable of laying out, they would be carried into the Vatican Library, where they would be shewn the Bulls of Excommunication that have been fulminated, or that are ready for it upon the first Opportunity. If they wanted to know the true State of the Finances, the Funds which produc'd them, the Method taken to raise the Subsidies, Chests would be open'd to them that are full of Indulgencies, Bulls, and Nominations to Benefices. If they were curious to enquire what Rewards are given to Citizens that have distinguished themselves, and what Statues are erected to them, they wou'd be shew'd Strings of Beads, *Agnus-Dei's*, and Reliques bless'd by the Pope. If they enquir'd where the triumphal Crowns were, Mitres, and Red Caps wou'd be set before them. If they ask'd to see the Kings of *Bithynia*, *Comagena*, *Armenia*, *Pontus*, and many other Sovereigns, daily making their Court to the least of the Senators, they wou'd present you with the Pretender and his two Sons. And, if their Curiosity reached so far, as to know the Princes

they have conquer'd, they would be told of the Assassination of *Henry III.* and his Successor, *Henry IV.*

Do'st think, dear *Aaron*, that were those illustrious Men, full of the antient Grandeur of their Country, but to see how low 'tis funk, they wou'd be less surpriz'd than we are at the Novelties we see? I fancy they wou'd be more so; and that if *Cæsar* were now alive, 'twould be more difficult for him to find out an old *Roman* in a modern *Italian*, than it wou'd be for thee to guess at the true Use and Purpose of the most intricate Ceremony of the *Nazarenes*.

Pleasures have taken a new Face in this City, the Carnival Season having render'd them more lively. I went yesterday to the Opera, at which there were no Singers but Men. I ask'd the Reason of it; and was answer'd, That it was not convenient for Women to perform in public in the Holy City. But I must tell thee, that there is nothing so ridiculous as this preposterous Delicacy. There are in two Streets at *Rome*, call'd *La Sereine* and *La Longare*, no les than 2 or 300 Whores. 'Tis a Mistake that they pay a Tribute to the Pontiff, as is commonly said; but they are tolerated, and even protected, by the Governor of *Rome*. I beg thee to consider which is more worthy of the Holy City; either 300 Houses of Debauchery, or a Couple of singing Women, whose Behaviour is very regular. Besides, their Places are supply'd by Men, who, that they may have good Voices, are depriv'd of the Means of becoming the Fathers of Families.

This Crime, which, in my Opinion, favours of Barbarity, and which the *Turks* themselves would not suffer, were it not for their excessive Jealousy, is practis'd every day in the Heart of *Rome*. A Father,

ther, for vile Lucre, renders his Son, at his very Birth, incapable of perpetuating his Family, and puts him in a State wherein he is neither Man nor Woman. I cannot conceive how they can tolerate such a Custom. Are not Men unhappy enough thro' the Misfortunes to which they are subject by Nature, without procuring them new ones? By a fundamental Law among the *Nazarenes*, all Eunuchs are excluded from Ecclesiastical Honours and Preferments: Nevertheless, the Pontiff has found out a Salvo for this Law. As he cannot repair the Damage caus'd by the Operation, he allows the Priesthood to be given to such as wear a leathern Pouch at their Breast, containing the sad Reliques of their Shame.

Nor is this the only comical Expedient made use of by the Pontiffs to accommodate the Laws of their Predecessors to their own Whimsies: They invent a thousand things every day, that are altogether as ridiculous. This is a Restraint upon them, which they are obliged to submit to, or otherwise they cou'd not support their Infallibility: For, if one altered and condemned what was done by another, there would be no such thing as Security in their Determination. And it is an essential Article of the *Nazarene* Religion, as I have already inform'd thee, to believe, that the Pontiff thinks rationally, even when he is mistaken.

The Honours that are paid to him resemble those which are reserv'd to the Deity. There is Prostration made at his Feet, and they kiss his Slippers with Respect. A Ceremony, from which the greatest of the *Nazarene* Kings are not excused, but look upon it as an Honour.

When the Pontiff is elected, he is seated on the Altar of the chief Temple of the *Nazarenes* †, where

† On the high Altar of St. Peter's Church.

the People, being assembled, fall on their Knees, worship him, desire him to give them the Blessings of this World, and pray to him to secure to them those of the World to come. The High Priest inclines to their Prayers. For a Pledge of his Promise, he extends two Fingers of his Hand, and makes a Motion with the Arm ; by which single Gesture, their Sins are remitted, Mankind becomes virtuous, and nature changes its Face : So heretofore *Jupiter* among the Pagans mov'd *Olympus* with a Glance of the Eye. He is afterwards carried in Triumph to his Palace. To compleat the Happiness of the *Romans*, he has nothing more to do, than soon to depart this Life.

What I am now saying will seem odd to thee ; and, unless I explain it to thee, thou wilt not comprehend the Meaning of it. Every Election of a Pope is of considerable Advantage to the City. It brings a Concourse of Foreigners, makes a Change in the Ministry, and in Offices ; and every one proposes to get something by the Alteration, except the Kindred of the deceas'd Pontiff, who are great Losers by his Death. The Favour which they enjoy in his Life-time is called *Nepotism*. As the High-Priests have no lawful Issue, because they are not marry'd, this Term is thought very proper to explain the Power of their Family during the Course of their their Pontificate. There has been a Favourite, who has carry'd Nepotism to a greater Height than Despotism is at *Constantinople*, and who has plunder'd more in 3 Years, than 20 Viziers have done in 50.

The *Romans*, when they wish for a new Pontiff, don't understand their Interests. It would be better for them to gratify the Avarice of one, who, after being cloy'd, wou'd let them be quiet, than to be a Prey to the insatiable Appetites
of

of 30, succeeding one another in a little space of Time.

To repair the Evils owing to this Nepotism, the High-Priests have assum'd an absolute Sway over the Seasons, the Elements, and the Fruits of the Earth, by which means they restore to the People (or at leaſt make them believe ſo) what their Family and Favourites take from them.

Some time ago there was an astonishing Number of Caterpillars which gnaw'd and destroy'd all the Trees, and every one complain'd of 'em. Recourſe was had to the sovereign Pontiff, who promised to drive these Inſects out of the Land ; but, being not ſure that he cou'd do it, and doubting whether the Caterpillars were ſo complaifant and traetble as to die at his Word of Command, he defer'd it for a good while under various Pretences, 'till at length the Season being far advanc'd, and the cold Weather coming on, he imagin'd, that, with the help of the approaching Winter, he might riſque his Authority againſt those Inſects ; he therefore ſent a ſingle Priest to excommunicate them in his Name, and to order them to prepare for Death with the utmoſt speed. This they obey'd the more readily, because it froze hard but 5 or 6 Days after the Decree was publish'd. The People cry'd out, *A Miracle !* Proceſſions were made thro' the City, Shrines were carry'd in Triumph, and the Monks received a great many Charities, to pay them for their Prayers.

Not long after this, an inferior * Pontiff affected to imitate his Sovereign, but did not ſucceed. His Country was ravag'd by Graſhoppers, which he excommunicated three Years ſucceſſively ; but, probably, being of the *Jansenijſt* Race, they appeal'd againſt it as an Abuse of the Pontiff's Decree, and

* The Pontiff of *Arles*.

did not think fit to die, 'till the Year in which they were not excommunicated.

Take care of thyself, dear *Monceca*; and may thy Riches surpass thy Desires.



LETTER XII.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS,
a Rabbi at Constantinople.

Paris —

I Went yesterday to an Assembly of gay Ladies and Gentlemen. The Marquis de *Farfin*, of whom I made mention to thee in the Beginning of my Letters, was the Man that carry'd me to it. I had an Opportunity there of making Reflections on the Craft of the Women, and the Treachery of the Men. When I came in, I found them running their Banter upon a certain Countess, to whom, at the same time, they all pretended a Friendship.

I know not, said a young Woman, *where the Countess picks up all the old Stories that she has been tiring us with. Really 'tis not right for People to doat before their Time.* ‘ You are mistaken, Madam, said a ‘ Spark with an affected Air; if Age gives a Right ‘ to Persons to be tiresome to the Public, the Countess has been in possession of that Sanction for ‘ above a Year.’ You are unlucky, reply’d another Woman, *I know the Countess; she is not yet come to her Doating-Age.* She was marry’d the Year that I was born, at which time she was but 24 Years of Age, and I am now but 32. ‘ How, Madam! cry’d a certain Coxcomb, with an Air of Surprize, ‘ You ‘ look

‘ look to be but a Child, and are you 32 Years of Age ! What you say now is as surprising, as it is incredible that the Countess should be but 56, tho’ she owns no more than 40.’

Just as they were determining the Age of this Countess, she came into the Assembly, and they all chang’d the Discourse ; when that very Woman, who had just before so liberally pass’d her Verdict on her that she was 56 Years of Age, said to her, *As I hope to be sav’d, Madam, you have such a Mixture of the Lilly and the Rose in your Complection, and you look so fresh, that you don’t seem to be 30 Years of Age.* Yet I am something more, reply’d the Countess, with a Simper, and an artful Turn of her Eyes, biting her Lips at the same time, to render them more of the vermillion Colour ; ‘ I have not, said she, slept a Wink all Night ; I was affrighted at my self this Morning when I look’d in my Glass, and really had resolved not to be seen to-day, only my Impatience to join good Company determin’d me to go abroad.’ *We should in that case have been prodigious Sufferers,* said the Spark who had just before been tearing her Character to pieces ; *for nobody, Madam, diffuses more Gaiety in an Assembly, than you do. I can safely swear, that I had rather hear one of the little Stories, with which you are sometimes pleas’d to entertain us, than the best Tale in Boccace or Fontaine.*

I was astonish’d at what I heard, and thought this Treachery insufferable. I could not approve of the Pleasure with which People cast a Ridicule on a Person with whom they convers’d every day, and to whom they gave the Title of Friend : But I was yet more provok’d at the gross Panegyric that was lavish’d upon her, which I look’d upon as an Affront of the deeper Dye, because it contain’d an Irony,

with which all that were present were perfectly acquainted.

As soon as I had quitted this Assembly, I cou'd not help expressing my Surprize to the Marquis de Farfin. *If all the People*, said I to him, *with whom you live are such Dissemblers*, I pity you; *for you can't easily give credit to what one another says*. *Who can assure you that People don't talk so extravagantly of yourself behind your back, as they do of this Countess?* *Those false-hearted People pretend to be her Friends, as they protest to be yours.* ‘ That gives me no pain,’ said the Marquis, I know Mankind too well to be deceiv'd by its vain Protests of Friendship, or cajoll'd by its fulsome Praises, thrown away without Discernment, and without Foundation. I comply with Custom and Mode. I myself often commend what I think ridiculous, reserving to myself the Power of laughing at it, as Opportunity presents. But, said I, *to what Purpose serves all this Disguise? Why are the Sentiments of your Heart continually betray'd? Your Mouth never interprets your Meaning: Sincerity is a Virtue quite unknown to you.* ‘ This,’ said he, ‘ is the manner of living in this Country; Dissimulation is the firnest Knot of Society. As 'tis plain that no Man can be so sure of his Heart, as to have a sincere Affection for a great many Persons with whom he converses, Restraint is practis'd, Artifice supplies the Place of Truth, Politeness stands for Sincerity, and Necessity has render'd this Disguise excusable.’

This, my dear Isaac, is one of the principal Causes of that Politeness so much boasted of among the French. They owe this Quality, of which they make such a public Ostentation, to nothing but the want of Candour and Sincerity. Their Compliments, their Civilities, their Flatteries, are the Consequences of

of their Dissimulation. A Philosopher ought to look upon their Praise, as so much Poison infus'd in a Liquor delicious to the Taste.

A Man in this Country thinks of nothing more, than how to give superficial Pleasure to all that he meets with. He salutes one, flatters another. He embraces a Person, of whom he has but a slight Knowledge, with Marks of Tenderness. One wou'd swear, that every *Frenchman* was a *Titus*; and that they reckon the Days in which they have not made some Person happy, as so many Days lost: But when one searches their Temper to the bottom, their Treachery soon appears. You shall see a Man who has been praising another for ten Years together, and yet loses no Opportunity to give a mortal Stab to his Reputation, purely to gratify his satirical Vein. The Genius of the *French* is turn'd to Scandal. 'Tis the Foible of the Nation; 'One Friend often sacrifices another to the Pleasure of a Jest, and there are few Friendships in this Country that can stand the Test of a smart Joke.' Nay, it is a hard matter to find People so happy in any Acquaintance, as to make them the Confidants of their Troubles, or the Depositaries of their Secrets: And, as true Friends are scarce every where, they are more so in *France*, than any where.

This censorious and backbiting Temper, which prevails among the *French*, puts a prodigious Constraint upon all their Actions. They are cautious of the least Step they take, because they know that they are incessantly canvass'd by jealous Eyes which are on the Watch to ridicule them. So in all public Assemblies, at the Theatres, and in the Walks, they take great heed of their Gesture, their Manner of walking and laughing, the Tone of their Voice, and especially of their Dress. The Women carry this last Article to a surprising height. A General does

not deliberate with more Attention in a Council of War, upon the Event of a Battle, than a Coquet with her Chambermaids examine the good air of her Gown and Head-dres. The placing of a Patch at the Corner of the Eye, to render it more lively, or near the Lips, to make them of a more ruby Colour, is an Affair that calls for a profound Attention. Twenty Looking-glasses are consulted before they come to a Determination. The Charms of this sort have particular Names affix'd to them, which express their Qualities and Advantages. A Patch at the Corner of the Eye, has its Naine from that of an Assassin.

A Woman wou'd not be so uneasy to be confin'd a Prisoner to her own House for ten Years together, as to be seen undress'd but for a Moment in the *Tuileries*. This is a Name that is given to the Garden of the King's Palace, which is the finest, and most agreeable Walk in *Paris*, is very much frequented in the fine Season, and the common Rendezvous of the Beaus and Belles, who are always upon the Look-out for Objects to scandalize. *I can't conceive*, says one, *what the President's Lady means by taking the Abbé de *** with her to the Tuilleries*. *Let her stay with him all day long at home, she has my Consent*; but, *sure, she ought not to carry him to the Walks*; *that's setting the Public at Defiance, with a Witness*. ‘ And why shou'd not she, said another, There's the Marchioness and the Chevalier together; she has been parted from her Husband about a Week; but the Town-Talk gives her very little Uneasiness, and she carries it off with a good air.’

Scandal is the only Busines of great part of the Company that comes to walk in this Garden. There's another * frequented by Persons of a different Character, whose sole Conversation is about News.

• † Luxembourg.

They

They interfere in the Affairs of all the Princes of Europe. One affirms he has it from good hands, that *Thamas Kouli-Kan* will never enter into a Negotiation with the *Porte*. Another protests he is sure of the contrary. A third gives his Judgment on the Preliminaries of Peace between the Emperor and *France*; he offers to lay a hundred Pistoles that it cannot be firm and durable, and that the War will break out again in the Spring. An old Reformado affirms that *France* will be oblig'd to make a Peace, and that 'tis impossible for her to carry on the War. As a Proof of this, he takes notice how much superior the Soldiers of his Days were, in point of Courage, to those of the present Time; and affirms, that the Person who has not seen *M. de Turenne*, cannot be a Man of Courage. He laments for the Siege of *Philipsburg*, which he treats like a little paltry Town, and thinks, that the King's greatest Strength consists in his Companies of Invalids.

* There's a third Garden, which indeed is not so much frequented now as when the Duke Regent was alive, but is the Spot where Love and Pleasure fix'd their Residence. There pass'd but few days, in which some Adventure did not happen to the prejudice of the Honour of Husbands. There *Cupid* was perpetually at war with *Hymen*, upon which Subject I have been told a pleasant Story. Several private Families have Dcors of their own which lead into this Garden. A Lover was conceal'd in a By-Place expecting his Mistress, who had promis'd to give him a Meeting in the Night, and was as good as her word, by making her Husband believe, after Supper, that she wanted to take a turn out purely for the Air: He the more readily consented to it, because himself had made an Assignation in the same Garden; and therefore, soon after she was gone,

* *The Palais Royal.*

E 6.

he went in quest of his Mistress. The Place he chose to cool his own Passion, happen'd not to be far from the very Spot where his Wife was cooling another's. He heard a little Noise; and the Wife readily imagin'd, that the People that so were near her, were not fooling away their Time in idle Prattle. Two or three Persons that were walking in the Garden, and coming near the Place where the Scene of Action was, interrupted the Performers, and forc'd them to change their Situation. How great was the Surprize of the two Gallants, when they found that they were even with one another, and that the Wife of the one was the Mistress of the other! At the first Dash they cou'd not so far contain themselves but the People tho' unseen, over-heard 'em, and became so well acquainted with the Adventure, that next day they made it public. The unfortunate Husbands had no other way to check the Currency of the Report, but by a perfect Dissimulation of their Resentment, and by comforting themselves with the Reflection, that they had been reveng'd on one another by *Lex Talionis*.

Farewell, dear Isaac. They say here that *Osman Basha* † is dead. Pray, let me know whether it be true; and, if so, send me the Particulars of the Death of a Man so extraordinary.

† The late Count de Bonneval.

L E T T E R

LETTER XIII.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS,
a Rabbi, at Constantinople.

Paris—

I Went a while ago to make a Visit to the public Libraries, of which there are several at *Paris*, that have Manuscripts worthy of the Curiosity of the Learned. These Libraries are open upon certain Days of the Week, when the Librarians attend to shew the Place of any Books that are wanted, as well as to see that none are carry'd away. 'Tis a great Help to all those who apply to the Sciences, to have the Conveniency of the use of so many Writings, the bare collecting of which for these several Years, has cost a great deal of Pains and Money.

In these Libraries there are all sorts of Books, even those the *Nazarenes* look upon as prohibited; which renders them much more compleat and useful: for thou can't not imagine how many Writings that deserve the Esteem of the latest Posterity are prohibited. When a Book comes out that treats of Philosophy, 'tis examin'd by the Monks; and if the System which it contains be not thoroughly relished by them, 'tis condemn'd, and the Copies suppress'd. If it treats of Politics, 'tis a Subject that oblig'd the Author to be more upon the Reserve, because it concerns the Ministry. Nor can History be written with that Freedom which it demands. 'Tis dangerous for the Living to speak of the Dead; an Author being oblig'd to palliate many Facts which happen'd in former Reigns, for fear of disobliging powerful Families, and numerous Bodies of Men in Authority.

An Historian who would give a faithful Account
of

of all Transactions from the Reign of *Henry III.* to the present, has no other Chance or Choice, but the Pleasure of telling the Truth, and the Sorrow of being banish'd his Country, and to seek Protection in foreign parts against the Persecution he has drawn upon himself. For there are certain Friars * who would never forgive him, were he to write a faithful Account of the Murder of *Henry III.* †. There are others ‖ who wou'd employ their Credit, to be reveng'd on any Author that shou'd but give a faithful Account of the Wickednes of their Father *Guiguard* ‡. And, in short, all wou'd join together, if they were accused, to have been indirectly the Authors of the Assassination of *Henry IV.* by their seditious Preachments, and by their defamatory Libels, and by their infamous Declamations, while the League subsisted.

The Authors who write of those Times have not been able intirely to conceal the Knowledge of these Facts; but they partly disguise them; and they endeavour to soften them according as they find their Advantage in it, or as they are forc'd to it by any Check or Constraint upon them.

Some time ago, a Monk ** who had wrote several Histories in which he was reproach'd to have falsify'd a great many Facts, took it into his head, in order to retrieve his Reputation, to relate the Disputes of some of the sovereign Pontiffs according to the exactest Truth ††. As soon as his Book came out, he was proscrib'd at *Rome*. The *Nazarene* Pontiff was horribly provok'd that any one shou'd dare to trouble the *Manes* of his Predecessors. He

* The *Jacobins*. † This flagrant Crime was committed by *James Clement*, a *Jacobin*. ‖ The *Jesuits*.

‡ The *Jesuit* who was hang'd for the Assassination of *Henry IV.* ** *Maimbourg* the *Jesuit*. †† The Schism of the West.

thought that their Irregularities were a Mystery which no mean Mortal shou'd pretend to dive into. By his Order the Monk was turn'd out of his Convent, punish'd for having wrote the Truth, and he lost the Favours and Rewards which he had got by his Lyes *.

In the mean time, the Prohibition of Books is the wrong way to suppress them, because, no sooner is a Book prohibited to be read, but every body is eager to buy it. The Bookseller thereupon raises the price of it, when 'tis sold for much more than it was before; and some Works have had half a score Impressions, of which there wou'd not have been sold 200 Copies, if the Curiosity of the Public had not been excited by the Prohibitions of the Magistrates and Pontiffs. That which still raises the Credit of such prohibited Books is, that they are generally good and instructive, and are calculated for Men of Wit and Learning; whereas most of those Books which are publicly sold, are but Romances and Stories, fit to divert silly Women, and some Abbés, a Man of Genius chusing rather not to write at all, than to write against his Sentiments.

I have already mentioned some of the learned Men of this Country to thee, and I know several more. One of 'em † has just published a political Piece, which, tho' it has a good deal of Fire, Wit, and good Sense, yet the Author has given into some false Notions, into which he has been misled by Fears and Prejudices. The Hopes of some Reward has determin'd him to publish some new Writings in support of the Absurdities of his former ones. He renders Subjects, by his System, not only Slaves, but also deprives them of the Consolation

* The Pope had wrote a Letter to *Maimbourg*, to congratulate him on his History of the Schism of the Greeks. † The Abbé de St. Pierre.

of carrying their Complaints to the Foot of the Throne *, and of procuring Relief to their Grievances, by making them known to those who are best able to give it. But upon all those Topics where he has been able to write with Freedom, Reason has every where shone out with Splendor, and, take the Flattery out of his Book, 'tis a compleat Piece.

There is another Author † whose Stile is lively, and pathetic. 'Tis plain he has a brilliant Genius, but 'tis superficial; his Writings being agreeable *Nothings*, if any thing which amuses without instructing may be call'd by that Name.

A certain Fryar ‡ some Years ago publish'd a *History of France*, written with Purity, and even with Sincerity, down to the Reign of *Francis I.* From that time the Truth began to suffer an Eclipse, and was intirely immers'd in the following Reigns.

Another Author ||| has been more free in a History which he has publish'd of several of the ancient Nations. 'Tis a compleat Piece, and is written with Purity, and the greater Sincerity and Freedom, because among the *Medes* there were no *Jesuits*, and because the Court is little, if at all, concern'd as to the Affairs that happen'd in the Time of *Philip of Macedon*, and that of *Alexander* his Son.

A young Gentleman §§ has wrote Comedies and Histories of Gallantries, which are very taking, but his Stile is bombastic; for there is in his Writings a certain affected Strain, which is far from being natural; so that in reading of his Works, one would be apt to think sometimes, that the Author invents, and the Fops writes.

* The Abbé de St. Pierre seems to disapprove of the Remonstrances of Parliaments. † The Abbé de Fontaines. ‡ Father Daniel. ||| M. Rollin. §§ M. Marivaux.

The

The Son of a celebrated Poet || published a Satire some time ago, with more Malice than Wit, on the Disturbances and Troubles occasion'd by the Disputes of the *Jansenists* and *Molinists* †, of which I have already given thee an Account in some of my former Letters. He knew what he had to expect from the Indignation of his Enemies, whom he thereby drew upon himself, and it was with great Difficulty that he escap'd their Revenge.

The *French* are naturally lively, and quick of Apprehension; and if they were at liberty to give their Genius its full Scope, there are no People that wou'd carry their Reflections as far as they. 'Tis a Folly for the *English* to flatter themselves that they reason more justly: All their Advantage is, that they can let their Fancy rove more at large, without reducing it at every Turn to Principles which are always opposite to the Truth. How is it possible to go to the bottom of any Subject, when a Man is every moment check'd, and always oblig'd to study for ways and means to reconcile Reason to Chimaera's, and Truth to Falshood?

It ought to be remark'd as somewhat surprising, that there are so many People of prodigious and sublime Talents in this Country, where every thing is done that is possible to keep the Minds of the Subjects within a certain Sphere, for fear they shou'd soar too high. The Education which they have from their very Childhood, tends rather to give them chimerical and confus'd Ideas, than to teach them how to argue justly and clearly. The Monks who have the care of their Education, and train them up in their own Principles, keep them out of the right Method of Study. When a Lad is come to be nine or ten Years of Age, he is shut up in a College,

|| *Crebillon*, the Son. † The Title of it was *L'Ecu-mair; or, the Skimmer.*

where he is taught the Sciences in such a manner as to give him an Aversion to them, and they put him out of conceit with good Authors, by their Method of explaining them. They talk to him of *Gassendi*, *Des Cartes* and *Newton*, as Persons of but a moderate Genius. There is scarce a Regent of Philosophy, but proudly takes Precedency of those great Men, and sets greater value by his Notes, than by the Works of *Mallebranche*. There is a Society of Friars * who teach the *Belles Lettres* with good Success, but have such an Aversion to true Philosophy, that they are become the Scourge of it.

The most celebrated of these Colleges, is that which they call the *Sorbonne*; and it is likewise the most antient. There are several others under its Direction. Its Reputation was in some former Centuries considerable, but for above these hundred Years past it has been every day declining. It render'd itself contemptible by its Decisions in the time of the League, when it favour'd Assassination among other Crimes, and espoused the part of that Rebellion and Impiety, which were covered with the Veil of Religion †. It endeavour'd afterwards every now and then to do something to be talk'd of worthy of its former Character, but it could not succeed; for the Majority of its Members carry'd it against the Opinion of the Minority, who were for openly

* The *Jesuits*.

† In the Year 1589. the *Sorbonne* was so insolent, as to pass a bloody Decree against *Henry III.* and it was none of their fault that the Crown did not pass to the Family of the *Guise*, or that it did not fall a prey to the *Spaniards*, whom the Rebellion cover'd with the Mask of Religion, had brought into the heart of *France*.

————— *Sæpius olim*

Religio peperit, scelerosa atque impia facta.

Lucret. de Rer. Nat. Lib. 1. v. 84.
main-

maintaining their Privileges, and those of their Church, with a high Hand.

By what I tell thee, thou may'st judge how difficult it is for a *Frenchman* to rise to a certain Point. The Studies of his Youth are so far from a Possibility of being useful to him, that they only serve to obstruct his Advancement, and to put him out of the Road of Truth. Scholastic Philosophy is Poison to the Mind, and renders it incapable of that just Reasoning, which is only to be acquir'd by profound Meditation. Yet there are several *Frenchmen*, who without any Assistance raise themselves to a Degree of Eminence. But then they must have the more Genius and Imagination, because they have not only Ignorance to overcome, but the Prejudices of Childhood, and those of Education, which they imbib'd from their first Masters. I cou'd tell thee, dear *Isaac*, some of their philosophical Theses for the Exercise of the Scholars in this Country, which wou'd make thee laugh. The following is one of the most considerable of a School kept by the Monks * ; *God may have created the World, and yet the World be eternal; of which the following is a Proof. There is no Time in God; in him the Effect always follows the Will. Suppose that God had pleased that the World shou'd have been from all Eternity, the World wou'd then have been so.* A Child knows that a Thing cannot pass from a Non-Entity to an Existence, without having had a Beginning; consequently, if the World was made, there must have been a Time when it had not a Being; therefore it is not eternal. 'Tis in Quirks of this kind, and such chimerical Arguments, that the Youth pass the Time of their Studies; and, after having labour'd many Years, they are no wiser than when they began.

* The School of the *Thomists*.

Take care of thy Health, dear *Isaac*. In my next Letter I will make amends for the Gravity of this. I endeavour to write to thee alternately for thy Amusement and thy Instruction. I fancy that thou hast an universal Taste to gratify; and I treat of Variety of Subjects, as they rise to my Imagination.



LETTER XIV.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS,
a Rabbi, at Constantinople.

Paris —

I Told thee in my last, dear *Isaac*, that I had been to take a View of the Libraries. I there turn'd over the Works of the antient Doctors, whom the *Nazarenes* call the *Fathers*, in which I found many excellent Things worthy of the Attention of a Philosopher; but I was surpriz'd at the Acrimony and Gall which I discover'd in the Writings of Men who are cry'd up as Patterns of Moderation. In my Opinion, the Books of some of the *Pagan* Authors (such as *Tully's Offices*, and the *Precepts of Epictetus*) contain a purer System of Morality, and more conformable to the Law of Nature. The *Nazarene* Doctors, purely to blacken their Adversaries, and to excite the Public Hatred against them, have in every Age lessen'd the Value of their Works; which Passion, so contrary to Magnanimity and Wisdom, has carry'd them into the greatest Extravagance. As soon as they began to be supported by the Authority of Princes, or that of the People, they preach'd against Toleration, and thought themselves authoriz'd.

authoriz'd not to spare the most venerable Personages, but abused Sovereigns and Subjects all alike.

The *French* of the present Age exclaim now against the horrid Licentiousness of the Preachers in the Reigns of *Henry III.* and *Henry IV.* They publicly condemn the Transactions of those Incendiaries; and as for them who think it lawful to rebel against their Prince, because he happens to be of a different Religion from his People, they look upon that Opinion to be contrary to the public Good, and to the Character of an honest Man. They don't consider that what happen'd in the Time of the League, was the Practice a little after the Death of *Constantine*; that is to say, as soon as the Clergy had Credit enough to excite Disturbances and Divisions. The seditious Preachments of *Boucher* against *Henry IV.* are not more contrary to the Respect which is due to the Persons of Sovereigns, than the outrageous Invectives of *Gregory of Nazianzen* against the Emperor *Julian*. This *Nazarene* Doctor thought he had good Cause to write the severest Things against that Prince, because when he came to the Empire, by profane Sacrifices and abominable Mysteries, he cancell'd the Initiation which he had receiv'd into the holy Mysteries *, and defil'd the Water of his Baptism. The Meaning of this in few Words is, that he thought he ought to abuse the Person of *Julian*, because he had quitted the *Nazarene* Doctrine. The seditious *Boucher* made use of the same Pretext to declaim against *Henry IV.* whom he accus'd of *Anti-Papism*, or *Protestantism*. I can't comprehend, dear *Isaac*, how that which was innocent 1400 Years ago, can be thought a Crime now. Either it must be own'd that *Boucher* was justifiable in rail-

* Αιματί μεν ουχ το λείρου, αποφυγεῖται, τη καθ πρᾶς τελειωσει, τη, τελειωσι τε μυστάς αὐτούθεις. *Gregorii Nazianzeni Invectiva I. in Julianum*, p. 58.

ing at *Henry IV.* (which is a shocking Assertion) or that *Gregory of Nazianzen* was in the wrong to go about to stain the Memory of the Emperor *Julian*, who was a mild, sober, chaste, learned, liberal, and intrepid Prince, and possess'd all the moral Virtues in an eminent Degree.

Many of the *Nazarenes*, dear *Isaac*, have left off that Worship and Adoration, which was heretofore generally paid to all the antient Doctors. And of late there have been several Men, who, shaking off the Yoke of Prejudices, have publicly condemn'd every thing in the Writings of those Fathers, which is contrary to right Reason and Equity. 'Tis even surprizing that their Eyes were not sooner open, and that it was so long before they discover'd the Resemblance of the Conduct of the antient Doctors to that of the Moderns, which had been so sharply censur'd.

In looking back to the primitive Ages of *Nazarenism*, I find, dear *Isaac*, among the Clergy, the same Manners, the same Phraseology, and the same Maxims as among the Moderns. *Eusebius* describes to me, in the Person of *Paulus Samosatenis*, the Haughtiness of the Prelates of *Italy, France, Germany, England, &c.* Not to mention, said this Author, his Pride and Arrogance on account of the secular Dignities he was vested with, he chose rather to have the Title of *Ducenary*, than that of *Bishop*. He walk'd out in Pomp to the public Places, reading and dictating Letters, and encompass'd with his Guards, of whom some went before him, and others behind. His Pride and Arrogance had render'd the Christian Religion odious to the Gentiles *. Cou'd there be a more

* Οὐτε ὡς υψηλα φρονεῖ καὶ υπῆρχε κοσμικὰ αἰξιωματα υποδυομένος. η, Δευτηναρίου μαλλον η Επισκοπος θελων καλεισθαι καὶ σοῦν καλα τας αγορας. Καὶ επιγολας αναγνωσκων καὶ

more exact Picture, dear *Isaac*, of a Cardinal marching in *Fioco* in the Streets of *Rome*? A Man wou'd think the Passage extracted from the Books of some modern Historian, were only the three last Words alter'd, and were it said, *that his Pride and Arrogance had render'd the Romish Religion contemptible to the Jews, instead of the Christian Religion to the Gentiles.*

As the antient *Nazarene* Doctors and Prelates had the Haughtiness of the Moderns, so they had the same domineering Spirit. They took the same Care to interest the Sovereigns in their Causes, and to persuade them that Religion requir'd, that they shou'd persecute those whom they did not look upon as orthodox. 'Twas by their Advice that the Emperor *Justinian* did not think he committed Murder, when they whom he condemn'd to Death made profession of a different Religion from his own *.

I also discover, dear *Isaac*, among the antient *Nazarene* Pontiffs, an Inclination to push things to an Extremity, to animate the Populace to excite Seditions when they had a Tendency to augment their Power. *Cyril of Alexandria* was a perfect Cardinal *de Retz*, for he did the same thing in *Egypt* which the latter did in *France*. This is a Truth which the *Nazarene* Writers, let them be of what Sect they will, are all agreed in, ' St. *Cyril*, says *Bar-beyrac* †, was, in the Opinion of the Abbé *du Pin*,

καὶ υπαγορευων αμαβελίζων δημοσιὰ καὶ δορυφορύμενος τῶν μεν προπορευομένων τῶν δὲ εφεπομένων τολλαν τὸν αριθμὸν. Ως καὶ την πιστιν φθονεισθας καὶ μισεισθας διὰ τὸν αριθμὸν. Ως καὶ την πιστιν φθονεισθας καὶ μισεισθας διὰ τὸν οὐχον αὐτὸς καὶ την υπερφανίαν της καρδίας. Euseb. Hist. Ecclesiast. lib. vii. cap. xxx. p. 280. Edit. Vales.

* Οὐγας οι ἐδόκει φονος αιθρωπον ειναι, ην γε μη της αυτης δοξης οι τελευτηες τυκαιοιεν ουλες. Procopius in *Ανεκδοτοις*, p. 60.

† Preface to the Law of Nature and Nations, p. 46.

‘ an

an ambitious turbulent Man, who having nothing at heart but the Increase of his Power, no sooner saw himself advanc'd to the Episcopal See, but by his own Authority he drove out the *Novatians*, and depriv'd their Bishop of his Estate. He attack'd the *Jews* in their Synagogues, and, at the Head of his People, took them out, banish'd them from *Alexandria*, and suffer'd the *Christians* to plunder them; having, no doubt, the holy Maxim of the Bishop of *Hippo* for his Warrant, That every thing appertains to the Believers; and that the Ungodly have a Right to nothing. St. *Cyril* also embroil'd himself with *Orestes* the Governor of *Alexandria*, upon whose Authority he was continually incroaching. Five hundred Monks, with their Bishop at their Head, surrounded the Governor one Day, wounded him with Stones, and wou'd have kill'd him, if his Guards and the People had not stopp'd their Fury. It cost a Monk his Life, who was taken and put upon the Rack. St. *Cyril* made him pass for a Saint. A famous Pagan Philosopher, nam'd *Hypacius*, was the Victim which the Bishop's Partizans sacrificed to the *Manes* of their Martyrs; for he was cruelly torn to Pieces, because he was accused of having exasperated the Governor against the Prelate.'

Were not the Troubles caus'd by the *Frondeurs*, my dear *Isaac*, the very Picture of these? 'Tis true, that the Cardinal *de Retz* did not take a Guard of 500 Monks with him when he went to the Parliament, but he employ'd a great Number of them in several Things which were altogether as useful to his Designs. Methinks, in the Person of the *Egyptian* Governor, I see the Cardinal *Mazarine* obliged to fly from *Paris*; and in that of *Cyril*, I find the Pride, Audaciousness, Ambition, and the seditious Spirit of the *Parisian* Pontiff. I don't think there can be found

found two Characters so like to each other as these *Nazarene Prelates*: Yet, by some astonishing Caprice, of which the human Mind alone is capable, the one is look'd upon as a Saint, as an Author whose Writings ought to be the Basis of the *Nazarene Morality*; and the other as a seditious Man, a Knave, and one unworthy of the Rank he stood in. The Reason, perhaps, of so absurd an Opinion is, that one liv'd 1300 Years ago, and the other, to his Misfortune, was born in these latter Times. If he had been Patriarch of *Alexandria*, he might with Impunity have besieg'd the Governor at the Head of an Army of Monks, made the People rebel, and excited them to tear a Woman to Pieces, whom her Sex and Superiority of Genius wou'd not protect from Monastic Fury, and his Memory would not have been tarnish'd by Actions so contrary to his Character.

'Tis happy for many People, that they were born in some Ages; they are as much oblig'd to Superstition and Ignorance, as many Conquerors are to Circumstances and Chance. If *Alexander* had liv'd in the Age of *Cæsar* and *Pompey*, he would have been a petty King of *Macedon*, who would have thought himself happy to have serv'd under one of those *Romans*: He would not have made a more conspicuous Figure in the World, than a *Decianus*, a *Ptolemy*, and such sort of Sovereigns. If the *Gyrrils*, the *Gregorys* of *Nazianzen*, the *Augustins*, and divers others, had written in the Reigns of *Henry III.* and *IV.*, they wou'd have been deem'd, either as seditious Persons, or such as preach'd up a System of Morality intirely contrary to natural Equity. Is there any thing in Fact that is more directly opposite to Humanity, than the Opinion which was advanc'd by *Augustin*? He pretends, That according to the *Divine Law*, the *Just* and

the Believers have a Claim to every thing; and that Heretics have a Right to nothing that they possess. A modern Writer has severely reprimanded this Doctor for an Opinion so contrary to the public Tranquillity. This abominable Principle, says he, turns human Society topsy-turvy *.

An Opinion, the Consequences of which have been so often pernicious to the whole Race of Mankind, cannot be condemn'd with too much Warmth. The greatest Misfortunes of States are commonly owing to no other Source than the dangerous Opinion, That it was lawful to seize the Estates of Unbelievers, and to force them to change their Religion. What was it gave rise to that horrible Massacre on St. Bartholomew's Day, but this pernicious Maxim? How have all Men of Probity exclaim'd against the Divines for stirring up the People by their seditious Discourses? How did they detest the Libels, the Preachments, and all the Pieces that caine from the Pens of the Leaguers? Yet all these Works only contain the same Principle maintain'd with such Vigour by *Augustin*. The modern Preachers, by what they have said or done, have only paraphras'd the Discourses of the antient Doctors. They pretended that *Henry IV.* ought not to be recogniz'd for King, and that his Partizans ought to be extirpated. Upon what did they ground their Opinions? Upon the Authority of the Fathers, and of *Augustin* in particular, who said, That Heretics ought to be destroy'd, to be punish'd with Death, and be depriv'd of their Estates. I will suppose myself for once, dear *Isaac*, to be the Preacher *Bucher*. As soon as I had convinc'd my Auditory of the Rectitude of *Augustin's* Morality, I would

* *Barbeyrac's* Preface to the Law of Nature and Nations, p. 36.

prove to them, that they ought to assassinate *Henry IV.* and to extirpate all his Adherents, if they have a mind to do an Action praise-worthy. The following is an Argument, to which there is no Answer.

‘ St. *Austin’s Books* contain none but useful Precepts, and such as ought to be look’d upon as essential to Religion. One of those Precepts expressly orders Heretics to be punish’d with Death, and to be depriv’d of their Estates. *Henry IV.* is a Heretic excommunicated by the Pope; and they who are attach’d to him are as criminal as he; therefore he, and all his Partizans, must be excommunicated. Whoever holds the contrary Opinion, is in an Error, and refuses to submit to the Authority of the Fathers of the Church.’

When one reflects, dear *Isaac*, upon this Objection against the blind Belief which many of the *Nazarenes* place in the Writings of their antient Doctors, without offering to distinguish the good from the bad, one is surpriz’d at the Force of Prejudice. If the extravagant Admirers of the Fathers only said, that there are excellent things in their Works, they would be in the right: But to go about to admit the Errors therein discovered, as certain and evident Principles; and to suppose, that because *Augustin*, *Gregory of Nazianzen*, *Chrysostom*, and others, advanc’d an Opinion contrary to the Law of Nations and the Light of Nature, Violence must therefore be done to Mankind for several Centuries, and good Sense put to the Torture; is to require Men to look upon others of their Fellow-Creatures for Gods, who had no other Advantage than that of living before them. An Author may declare his Sentiment as to the particular Opinions of *Boffuet*, *du Pin*, *Baronius*, or *Bellarmin*, because they have not been yet dead a thousand Years: But when their

Writings have liv'd ten Centuries, the Errors that are found in them will be chang'd into certain Truths. This being the Case, the Books of the *Nazarene* Doctors resemble the Cheeses of *Brie*, which are not good till they are of such an Age.

Fare thee well, dear *Isaac*, live content and happy, and keep a strict Guard against the bad Maxims of the *Fathers*.



LETTER XV.

*ISAAC ONIS, a Rabbi, at Constantinople,
to AARON MONCECA.*

Constantinople —

I Now answer that Letter of thine, dear *Monceca*, in which thou gavest me an Account of the antient *Nazarene* Doctors. I cannot but approve of thy Objections against some of their erroneous Opinions, which are also contrary to the public Good; but, methinks, while thou blamest the Faults in those Authors, thou hast not done Justice to their good Qualities. I allow that the Generality of 'em have often fallen into great Irregularities; that Passion has carried them too far; and that an outragious Zeal prompted them to advance Sentiments directly opposite to good Morality. They were Men, and as such, subject to human Errors; Hatred, Superstition, and Prejudices, have made them deviate from the right Way: But who are the Doctors to whom this has not happened? Divines of all Religions are but Mortals, and by consequence

sequence frail Creatures, who deceive themselves, and are the Bubbles of their own Passions.

The Philosophers are the only Writers capable of avoiding such Irregularities. As they are dispassionate Persons, they endeavour to convince by calm Reasoning, and not by Violence and Authority ; so that if their Vivacity or Self-conceit carry them out of the way, they soon own their Faults, correct their Sallies, and return into the right Path, being enlightened by the Law of Nature, which God has granted to Mankind, to serve them for their Guide ; and which Philosophers are always very careful to consult. Therefore, my dear *Moncea*, in the antient *Nazarene Doctors*, the Divine must be distinguished from the Philosopher. When they write of controversial Points, they did as the Writers of this Age do ; when Arguments fail them, they have recourse to Injuries, endeavour to blacken their Adversaries, give the Name of *holy and pious Zeal* to their Choler, and murder the Reputation of those against whom they write, for the greater Glory of God. 'Twas thus that *Jurieu* the Minister acted in these latter Days towards *Arnauld* and *Bayle* ; and thus did *Jerome* behave heretofore to *Rufinus* : But when the antient Doctors treated of philosophical Matters, which they always debated without being carried away by their Passion, they have often equall'd the Glory of the greatest Men.

To be convinc'd of this Truth, we need only give some Attention to the Writings of St. *Augustin*. Those where he treats as a Philosopher are as good, as those in which he discusses Controversial Points are full of Sophisms, and Principles contrary to good Morality ; in the Number of which is the Maxim he establishes, when the Disputes that he had with the *Donatists* had put him in an ill Humour : He maintain'd, that Heretics ought to be exterminated.

If some of this *Nazarene* Doctor's Writings had been his only Pieces transmitted to Posterity, I should think him as a Man worthy of the Esteem, and even of the Admiration of the greatest Philosophers. The *Des Cartes*, the *Mallebranches*, the *Lockes*, are oblig'd to him for several Ideas, and the Things which they have borrowed from this *African*, are not the least Ornaments of their Works.

Perhaps thou did'st never reflect on what I am telling thee. 'Twill be easy for me to make it very plain to thee, that the modern Metaphysicians have drawn their chief Opinions from the Books of this *Nazarene* Doctor, who ought to be consider'd as the chief Restorer of Metaphysics.

I will instance first in *Mallebranche*, whose System upon the Ideas, by which we see all in God, is described at full length by *Augustin*. ‘God, says this Modern *, is very strictly united to our Souls, by his Presence; so that it may be said, that he is the Repository of Spirits, in the same manner as Spaces are the Repositories of Bodies. This being granted, ’tis certain, that the Spirit is capable of discerning what there is in God, who represents the Created Beings, because this is very spiritual, very intelligible, and very present to the Mind; consequently the Spirit may see in God, the Works of God, supposing that God vouchsafes to discover to it, what there is in him, who represents them.’ And thus speaks the antient Author: ‘O God Almighty, thou hast created all Beings, and thou givest them Life. Thou art in all Places, thou fillest all alike. The Spirit may discern him, but cannot know him. Thou art present every where, either to reward Virtue, or punish Vice. All Things that exist have their Existence in thee. To

* *Recherche de la Verité*, lib. iii. cap. vi. p. 199.

‘some

‘ some thou giveſt Life, to others Discernment *;’ I am of Opinion, dear *Monceca*, that I am in the right to assert, That the System of the French Philosopher was not unknown to the *African*. All the rest of the Chapter, from which I have quoted this Passage, corroborates my Opinion, and *Mallebranche* himself seems to own, that this Opinion had been receiv’d and even adopted by *Augustin*.

The System of innate Ideas, so dear to the *Cartesians*, is also to be found in his Works; and from thence the modern Metaphysicians have taken all their Arguments. ‘ I think; therefore I am,’ says ‘ one of the illustrious Followers of Des Cartes†. Now, ‘ we could not have any Certainty of this Proposition, if we did not distinctly conceive what it ‘ is to Be, what it is to Think. If therefore it can- ‘ not be deny’d, but we have in us the Ideas of Be- ‘ ing and of Thought, I ask by what Senses they ‘ enter’d? Are they luminous or colour’d, so as to ‘ be admitted by the Sight? Are they of a grave or ‘ acute Sound, to be admitted by the Ear? Of a ‘ good or a bad Smell, to be admitted by the Nose? ‘ Of a good or a bad Savour, to be admitted by the ‘ Taste? Are they cold or hot, hard or soft, to be ‘ admitted by the Touch? — And if no reasonable ‘ Answer can be return’d to this, it must be con- ‘ fessed, that the Ideas of Being and of Thought do

* *Qui solus vivificas omnia; qui creasti omnia; qui ubique es, & ubique totus; qui sentiri potes, videri non potes; qui nusquam dees; — qui ubi non es per gratiam, ades per vindictam; qui omnia tangis; — quædam etiam tangis, ut sint & vivant, non tamen ut sentiant & dis- cernant, quædam vero tangis, ut vivant, & sentiant, & discernant, — & omnia contines sine ambitu, & ubique præ- sens es sine situ & motu.* *August. Hippoens. Epis. Me- ditat. cap. xxix. num. 3 & 6.*

† *L'Art de Penser*, part i. cap. 1. p. 12.

‘ in no sort derive their Origin from the Senses.’ These, my dear *Monceca*, are the strongest Arguments that are brought against the System, which derives all the Ideas from the Senses. They serve also to prove, that we have an innate Notion of the Deity, which the Soul brings with it. ‘ For, says *the same Author*, whom I have just now quoted, we are naturally inclin’d to think that our Opinions are erroneous, when we plainly see that they are contrary to the Ideas of Things: Therefore, we could not judge with Certainty, that God has not Parts, that he is not corporeal, that he is every where, that he is indivisible, if one had no Idea of it but by the Help of the Senses.’

All these Objections are to be found, almost *verbatim*, in the Writings of *Augustin*, who proves, in a strong and persuasive manner, that we must endeavour to know God in himself, and not in external Things; the Senses not being capable of conveying any true Idea of the Deity. ‘ I have err’d a long time, like a Sheep gone astray, said this Nazarene Doctor, seeking for thee, without me, whilst thou was’t *within* me. I sent out all my Senses as Scouts to get Intelligence of Thee, but they could bring me none; and if thou hadst not enlighten’d me, my God, and convinc’d me that thou residest in my Mind, I should never have known Thee, because I could never have come at it by the Help of the Senses *.’

* Ego erravi sicut ovis, quæ perierat, quærens te exterius qui es interius; & multum laboravi, quærens te extra me, & tu habitas in me. — Misi Nuncios meos omnes sensus exteriores, ut quærerent te, & non inveni: quia malè quærebam foris, quod erat intus. Video enim, lux mea Deus, qui illuminâsti me, quia malè te per illas quærebam, quia tu es intus, & tamen ipsi ubi intraveris nescierunt. *August. Scil. cap. xxxi. num. 1.*

After

After having laid down the innate Idea of the Deity for a Principle, he proves it from the same Arguments which the *Cartesian* Philosophers make use of to demonstrate that the Notions of Being and Thought cannot come by the Senses. ‘ If I ask ‘ my Eyes, continued he, they tell me, that since ‘ they are not colour’d, it is not by them that thou ‘ entrest into my Mind. My Ears tell me, that ‘ not being sonorous, thou did’st not come in by ‘ them. My Nostrils have no share in thy Idea, ‘ which can have no Scent; nor my Mouth, be- ‘ cause it cannot be tasted: And all my Senses de- ‘ clare, that since thou art not corporeal, they have ‘ not been able to give me any Notion of thee. I ‘ know now that this Notion was engraved in my ‘ Soul, &c. *

After having demonstrated to thee, my dear *Mon-
ica*, that not only the principal metaphysical Op-
inions of the *Cartesians*, but also the Arguments by
which they support them, are taken out of the Writ-
ings of *Augustin*; I will shew thee with the same
ease, that *Locke* was obliged to that *Nazarene* Doc-
tor for the Proofs of the Being of a God, and of the
Creation of the World. ‘ ’Tis of mathematical
Evidence, says that great English *Philosopher*
Locke †, That something has existed from all E-
ternity, because what was not from all Eternity had

* Nam oculi dicunt, si coloratus non fuit, per nos
non intravit. Aures dicunt, si sonitum non facit, per
nos non transivit. Nasus dicit, si non oluit, per me non
venit. Gustus dicit, si non sapuit, nec per me introivit.
Tactus etiam addit, si corpulentus non est, nihil me de
hac re interrogas—Absit ut ista crederem Deum meum,
quae etiam a brutalium sensibus comprehenduntur. *An-
gustinus*, ibid. num. 2.

† *Locke* of Human Understanding, 5th Edit. book ix.
chap. x. p. 529.

‘ a Beginning ; and that every Thing which has a Beginning must be produc’d by some other Thing. ‘ ’Tis also mathematically evident, That every Being which derives its Existence and its Beginning from another, derives also from another all that it has, and all that belongs to it. It must be confess’d, therefore, that all its Faculties come to it from the same Source. Therefore, the eternal Source of all Beings must also be the Source and Principle of all Powers and Faculties ; so that this eternal Being, must be the Almighty.’ *Augustin* was of the same Opinion as *Locke*. He express’d them indeed in a Stile not so clear, nor so philosophical. ‘ I ask’d the Earth, *says he*, if that was my God ? It told me, that it was but a meer Creature, liable to Corruption and Change. All the Beings which it contains confess’d the same Thing. The Sea and the Creatures therein, the Air and the Birds, the Sun, Moon and Stars gave me the like Answer, We are but Beings like thy self, created by the first Mover of all Things. If thou would’st find out the Deity, look back to the Source and Origin of all Things †.’

The Testimony of the whole World therefore proves to me the Existence of Almighty God. When one contemplates the Creatures, I see ’tis evident, that *every Being which derives its Beginning*

† Interrogavi terram si esset Deus meus ? Et dixit mihi, quod non ; & omnia quæ in ea sunt, hoc idem confessa sunt. Interrogavi mare, & abyssos, & reptilia, quæ in his sunt, & responderunt : *Non sumus Deus tuus* ; *quære super nos*. Interrogavi flabilem aërem, & inquit universus aër, cum omnibus incolis suis ; *Fallitur Anaximenes*, *non sum ego Deus tuus*. Interrogavi cœlum, lunam & stellas ; *Neque nos sumus Deus tuus*, inquiunt. *August. Solilog. lib. cap. xxxi. num. 4.*

from

from another Being, derives also from another all that it has. The Existence of the Creatures is a convincing Proof of that of the Deity, and an Attestation that cannot be rejected, if I make use of the Terms of *Augustin* †.

Let us now see what Resemblance there is between this Doctor's Proofs and those of *Locke*, as to the Necessity of the Creation of Matter by an intelligent and spiritual Being. I begin with the Objections of the latter. ‘ Others imagine, says ‘ he, that Matter is eternal, tho' they acknow- ‘ ledge an eternal cogitative and immaterial Be- ‘ ing. It must, say they, be acknowledg'd that ‘ Matter is eternal. Why? because you cannot con- ‘ ceive how it can be made out of Nothing. Why ‘ then don't you look upon your own self as eternal? ‘ You will answer, That 'tis, perhaps, because ‘ you began to exist but twenty or forty Years ago: ‘ But if I ask you what you mean by this Word, ‘ you, which then began to exist, you will be at ‘ a loss what to say. The Matter of which you ‘ are compos'd did not begin then to exist, be- ‘ cause if it did, it would not be eternal. It only ‘ began to be form'd and rang'd in the manner ‘ which was necessary to compose your Body. But ‘ this Disposition of Parts is not You. It does not

† Et dixi omnibus his qui circumstant fores carnis
meæ, *Dixistis mibi de Deo meo, quod vos non estis, dicite*
mibi aliquid de illo. Et clamaverunt omnes voce grandi,
Ipse fecit nos. Interrogavi denique mundi molem. *Dic-*
mibi si es Deus meus an non? Et respondit voce fortii,
Non sum, inquit, ego; sed per ipsum sum ego. Quem
quaeris in me, ipse fecit me. Interrogatio creaturarum
profunda est consideratio ipsarum. Responsio earum at-
testatio ipsarum de Deo. *Augustin. Soliloq. lib. cap.*
xxii. num. 5.

‘ constitute that Thinking Thing which is in you, and which is your self. When was it then, that that this Thinking Thing, which is in you, began to exist? If it never began to exist, *you must therefore have been a Thinking Thing from all Eternity.* And if you can acknowledge, that a Thinking Thing was form'd out of nothing, — Why can't you acknowledge, that an equal Power is capable of producing a material Being out of Nothing * ?

Locke proves the Power of the Creator, by the Reflection which Man makes on himself. *Augustin.* makes use of the very same Objection; ‘ I reflected, says he †, on my own Existence, and consider'd my Condition; I saw that I was a rational mortal Man. From whence then, said I, unless from the first Source of all other Beings, can such a Creature come? If God has not created them, every Thing must needs be its own Creator; which I know by my own Existence to be impossible: Therefore, of Necessity, all Things that Be must have been produced by a first Being, so-vereignly Powerful, Intelligent and Eternal.

* *Locke's Philosophical Essay on the Human Understanding*, book iv. cap. x. p. 535.

† Et redii ad me, & intravi in me, & aio ad me: Tu qui es? Et respondi mihi; *Homo rationalis & mortalis.* Et incepi discutere quid hoc esset, & dixi; unde hoc tale animal, Domine Deus meus? Unde nisi abs te? Tu fecisti me, & non ego ipse me. Quis tu per quem vivo ego; tu, per quem vivunt omnia? Dic quæso per miserationes tuas, unde hoc animal nisi abs te? An quisquam fese faciendi erit artifex? An aliunde quam à te, traditur esse & vivere? Nonne tu es summum esse, à quod est omne esse? Quicquid est, à te est, quia sine te nihil est. *August. Syllog.* lib. cap. xxxi. num. 3 & 4.

The Resemblance, dear *Moncea*, between the chief metaphysical Opinions of the greatest modern Philosophers, and that of *Augustin*, ought to engage thee whenever thou readest this Writer, to distinguish as I told thee in the Beginning of my Letter, the controversial Divine from the Philosopher. If thou observest the same Rule in the reading of the other ancient *Nazarene Doctors*, thou may'st be the better for a great many useful and instructive things that are in their Works, the Knowledge of which is necessary for all Men of Learning, let them be of what Religion they will.

Fare thee well, dear *Moncea*; live contented and happy, and ever while thou livest, cultivate the Sciences with Care.



LETTER XVI.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS,
a Rabbi at Constantinople.

Paris —

SINCE the Letter I receiv'd from thee, dear *Isaac*, in favour of the antient *Nazarene Doctors*, I have made it my Business to search for the Beauties and Imperfections in their Works. Notwithstanding the pompous things thou hast said to me in praise of *Augustin*, I find him guilty of considerable Faults, independent of those into which he has been carry'd by Passion and Whim. An outrageous Zeal, which may justly be called the Excess of Ambition, has been the Fault of almost all the Divines, to whom the *Nazarenes*, by way of
Emi-

Eminence, give the Title of *Fathers*. The Jest of it is, that they have scattered a good number of very fine moral Precepts through some of their Works, at the same time that they were preaching against Toleration, caballing against Princes, and persecuting their Adversaries. Thou art in the right, my dear *Isaac*, when thou say'st, that among the Fathers, the Divine ought to be distinguish'd from the Philosopher; for there are very few People that, like them, can blow hot and cold in a Breath, or unsay what they have said. *Chrysostom*, for instance, who is very properly call'd the *Augustin of the Greeks*, and who was as choleric and as testy as that *African*, cries up Clemency to the Skies; for he does not scruple to say, that 'tis a *Virtue which makes Men resemble the Deity* †; tho' whoever thought he put this Maxim in Practice, would be shrewdly mistaken. The first thing he did, when he was chose Pontiff at *Constantinople*, was to sollicite the Emperor *Arcadius* to pass a severe Decree against the *Eunomians* and the *Montanists*. He obtain'd his Request, and thereupon those *Nazarenes*, who were call'd Heretics, were banish'd not only from the Imperial City, but the most considerable Towns of Empire, and were forbid to hold Assemblies on pain of Death.

This *Augustin of the Greeks* did not stop there; for having no more *Montanists* to banish, he vented his Choler upon Persons of the greatest Distinction, and made public Harangues, or rather Invectives against them. His fullen Temper rais'd him so many Enemies at last, that many of the *Nazarene* Pontiffs, in a full Assembly, depos'd him; and the

† *Nihil est quod sic Dei similes faciat, ut malignis atque laudentibus esse placabilem.* *Chrysost. Homil.* 20. *upon Matthew.*

Emperor, who confirm'd their Sentence, banish'd *Chrysostom*; but after he had been some time in Exile, he was recall'd, and restor'd to his Dignity: Mean time the Evils which he had suffered, had made no Alteration in his Temper: He declaimed most indecently against the Empress *Eudoxa*, who again banish'd him from *Constantinople*; but as they were carrying him in Exile to *Pityus*, upon the *Black Sea*, he died.

This *Chrysostom* is the Patriarch of the *Molinists*, as *Augustin* is of the *Jansenists*. Nevertheless, it may be said, that if these two Authors are of very different Opinions as to the Points of the *Nazarene* Faith, they unite in the Opinion that combats Toleration, and destroys the first Principle of the Law of Nature, which enjoins that we should not do to another, what we would not have done to our selves. Now, I ask, whether any *Nazarene* wou'd like it, if the *Turks* should order all that live in their Country to believe in *Mahomet*, or be put to Death.

The Works of *Chrysostom* are written with very great Purity: His Stile comes much nearer to that of the Writers of old *Athens*, than that of *Augustin* does to the Elegance of the Writers of the *Augustan* Age. The *Greek Fathers*, in general, have wrote with greater Purity than the *Latin*. *Basil's Homilies* may be compar'd, for the Language, to the *Philippines of Demosthenes*. *Jerom* was the last *Nazarene* Doctor that wrote in elegant *Latin*.

Were it not for the sake of some good Things, which we find in some of *Augustin's* Works, his Stile would be intolerable. 'Tis the Stile of a Declaimer; for he repeats the same Thought twenty Times, and twenty different Ways. Is there any thing, for instance, so puerile, any thing so bombastic as that Passage, where, after having shewn,

as thou observest in thy last, that the Senses cannot convey any Notion of the God-head to the Soul, he new-vamps the Objection he had been just making in this manner. ‘ Nevertheless, when I seek my God, I seek a Light above all Light, which the Soul does not perceive. I seek a Voice above all Voices, which the Ear doth not hear. I seek an Odour above all Odours, which the Nose cannot smell. I seek a Substance above all Substances, which the Touch cannot feel *.’ The same Thought is express’d over and over by a String of new Antitheses †: And he did not find in his heart to drop it, till he had spent a couple of Pages in turning it all manner of ways. This declamatory Stile does infinite prejudice to the best of *Augustin*’s Writings. ’Tis irksome and disgusting to the Reader to see a Philosopher having recourse to false Brilliants, and crushing good Sense by the Weight of dull and childish Antitheses.

This vicious manner of Writing in *Augustin*, has spoil’d and brought into Contempt, the Works of a number of the antient *Nazarene Doctors*, who have endeavoured to imitate him. They have adopted his Stile, without being able to acquire his Genius; and are so infinitely short of coming up to their Model, that they have taken but a bad Copy. The Divines of the Tenth, Eleventh and Twelfth

* Attamen cum Deum meum quæro, quæro nihil minus quandam lucem super omnem lucem, quam non capit oculus: quandam vocem super omnem vocem quam non capit auris; quandam dulcorem super omnem amplexum, quem non capit tactus. *Div. August. Soliloq. lib. cap. 31. num. 3.*

† Ista lux quidem fulget ubi locus non capit. Ista vox sonat ubi spiritus non capit. Odor iste redolet ubi flatus non spargit. Sapor iste sapit, ubi non est edacitas. Amplexus iste tangitur ubi non devellitur. *Idem, ibid.*

Centuries have fallen into these ridiculous Antitheses. Their Writings are only stuffed with Sophistry, express'd in pompous Terms. *Anselm* the Archbishop of *Canterbury*, who liv'd in the Eleventh Century, in order to prove the Necessity of fulfilling a Mystery of the *Nazarene* Doctrine, makes a very tedious Discourse, in which he says nothing to the purpose. After having started an Objection, he only resolves it by a Quibble, or playing upon Words. ‘ Where was the Necessity, *says he*, for the Most High so to debase himself, and for the Almighty to take so much Pains, as to cloath himself with a Human Body to save Mankind? The Almighty Being needs only to will a Thing, and the Effect is sure to follow it. Men might therefore have been sav'd the very Moment that he had thought it fitting. By consequence the Incarnation was needless. But no, it was not, because it was solely operated by the Will of God, who is always just. He thought it proper, not because he was under a Necessity of saving Mankind in that Way, but because the Human Nature was to satisfy the Deity by this Incarnation. God had no occasion to suffer; but Man stood in need of the Suffering of God to be redeem'd from the Pains of Hell. God alone cou'd be sufficient for that Purpose; and had it not been for the Incarnation, Man could not have recover'd the Purity of the Angels *.

Is

* An aliqua necessitas coegit, ut Altissimus sic se humiliaret, & omnipotens ad faciendum aliquid tantum labaret? Sed omnis necessitas & impossibilitas ejus subjacet voluntati; quippe quod vult necesse est esse, & quod non vult impossible est esse. Solo ergo volente, & quoniam ejus voluntas semper bona est, solâ fecit hoc voluntate, non enim Deus egebat ut hoc modo hominem salvum fac-

Is not this, dear *Isaac*, a beautiful Collection of Phrases that are unintelligible, or at least insignificant? After he had said, that the Deity was able to have sav'd Mankind in what manner he pleas'd, is it not ridiculous to conclude, that he could not save them any other way than by cloathing himself with the Human Nature, because the Divine alone could suffice to that End? One finds throughout this whole Discourse, a playing upon Words, which render the Ideas of the Author perfectly incomprehensible. Should a Divine of these Days explain himself after so loose a manner, with Arguments so inconclusive, he would expose himself to a severe Reprimand. The *Boffuets* and the *Arnaulds*, the *Drelincourts* and the *Claudes* did not write after this manner; yet to all these learned Men, those of their Religion have not given the pompous Name of Fathers. It must be confess'd, that there was a Time when the *Nazarenes* were very lavish of this Title, and granted it to very mean Genius's. St. *Bernard*, who liv'd in the Twelfth Century, was not only illiterate, but a declar'd Enemy to all who cultivated the Sciences; insomuch, that 'tis no thanks to him, that they had not been entirely extinguish'd by Ignorance. This Man, by counterfeiting the Spirit of Prophecy,

ret; sed humana natura indigebat ut hoc modo Domino Deo satisfaceret. Non egebat Deus ut tam laboriosa patteretur; sed indigebat homo, ut sic de profundo inferni erueretur divinâ naturâ.—Hæc omnia humanam naturam, ut ad hoc restitueretur, propter quod facta erat, necesse erat facere. Sed nec illa, nec quidquid Deus non est, poterat ad hoc sufficere; nam homo ad quod institutus est non restituitur, si non ad similitudinem angelorum, in quibus nullum est peccatum, provehitur. *Anselmi, Archiepisc. Cantuariensis, Medit. de Redemptione Generis Humani, cap. iii. num. 1.*

gain'd

gain'd an infinite ascendant, not only over the Subjects but the Sovereigns also; and by his false Promises, he caus'd a prodigious number of *Nazarenes* to lose their Lives, who had taken the Cross upon them, to go and conquer *Palestine*, upon the certain Assurances which he gave them of Victory. When he had no more *Turks* to persecute, he vented his Gall upon Men of Learning, of whom *Abelard* was his first Victim, who did his utmost to defend the Philosophy of *Aristotle*, which they had begun for some Years to teach in *France*. It would have been surprising to have found any excellent Performances, and such as were proper to form Human Understanding, in an Author of this Character; nor has he left any Writings, but what are fitter for the use of mystical Devotees, than for Men of Learning and Philosophers. In some there are Expressions so low, and which convey such obscene Ideas to the Mind, that all the vicious Licentiousness in the Stile of *Petronius*, seems cover'd with a decent Veil, in comparison of the Expressions of this Divine. *What am I?* says he (in a Book which is very improperly intituled, *Most devout Meditations*) *A Man made of liquid Matter. The Moment my Existence commen-*

ced, I was form'd by Human Seed; and afterward this Froth coming to coagulate and grow, it was chan-

*ged into Flesh, &c.**

It must be confess'd, dear *Isaac*, that these are Meditations very well becoming Physicians; but I can't think they are very proper for the Education

* Quid sum ego? Homo de humore liquido. Fui enim in momento conceptionis de humano semine conceptus. Deinde spuma illa coagulata, modicum crescendo caro facta est. *Divi Bernardi Meditationes devotissimæ ad humanæ conditionis cognitionem*, cap. ii. num. i.

of Youth: For how can a Lad or a Girl, from Fifteen to Twenty Years of Age, think piously and without Distraction, of *that frothy Seed which comes afterwards to coagulate?* 'Tis ridiculous to give to such Discourses the Title of *most devout Meditations*. Were this to be admitted, one might as well admit this *Italian* Jest amongst edifying and pious Sentences, *Penso, è ripenso, come l' Husmo sia fatto del sposo d'un Cazzo* †. Which is a Phrase that tallies exactly with the Expression of the *Nazarene Doctor*.

Albert, and *Thomas of Aquinas*, who came after *Bernard*, were much more learned than he. They profited by the Study of *Aristotle's Books*, of which the Prophet of the Croisadoes had been pleased to forbid the Reading. In the Time of these two Authors, the Sciences began to sparkle and revive from their Ashes. The Writings of the first are in the same Stile as those of his Predecessors*. But they are not so lavish in Antitheses and playing upon Words, nor are the Sophisms near so frequent and so offensive. Thou art not a Stranger to the Works of *Thomas of Aquinas*, which, it must be own'd, contain several excellent Things; but they are obscur'd and disgrac'd by a great many others, that are pue-

† The Licentiousness of this *Italian* Passage must be pardon'd, for the sake of its Resemblance with that of *St. Bernard*.

* *Sunt quædam vitia, quæ libenter sive frequenter speciem virtutis prætendunt, ut cum verè virtia sint, creduntur esse virtutes: sicut severitas putatur esse iustitia, amaritudo mentis dicitur maturitas.—Dissolutio creditur spiritualis mentis lætitia, pigritia sive inordinata tristitia, judicatur morum gravitas, &c. Alberti Magni Paradis. Anim. de Virtute. Lib. 1. Prolog. This Enumeration of Vices which are honour'd with the Name of Virtues, takes up two great Pages, and indeed is of the same Stamp with St. Augustine's long-winded Antitheses.*

riile, impertinent and absurd, which Ignorance and scholastic Superstition have, however, consecrated under the Name of Theology, and cover'd with the Veil of Religion. The Stile of *Thomas of Aquinas* is little, if any thing, more refin'd than that of the Authors who went before him. That ill Taste in the manner of Expression and Writing, subsisted even in the Fifteenth Century, and was not totally extinguish'd till the Disturbances which arose among the *Nazarenes*. The Theologues having at that time form'd several Sects, saw themselves reduc'd to the Necessity of pleasing their Readers; and for this End were for imitating great Models, so that the Language of *Cicero* and *Virgil* came again into Fashion; and in a short time after, the Method of Argument underwent as great a Change as Diction had.

If *Nazarenism* had never been disturb'd by intestine Divisions, perhaps the modern Stile wou'd have been as confus'd as it was in the Time of *Thomas of Aquinas*. It does not appear, that the *Nazarene* Doctors who came several Years after him, had done much to perfect Taste, or made any great Progress in the right way; it seems, on the contrary, that some deviated still further from it. *Raymond Jordan*, who liv'd in the Fourteenth Century, and publish'd his Writings by no other Name than that of *Idiota*, has stuff'd them with affected Antitheses; and his Stile is much more vicious than that of *Augustin*. He runs incessantly in chase of Thoughts which are rather Childish than Brilliant. The Character he gives of Divine Love seems to have been written by some honest Capuchin of a Country Village.

- ‘ Love, says he, consolidates things that are broken.
- ‘ It renders fickle Minds constant. Love teaches.
- ‘ Love knows no Enemy. Love praises. Love censures.
- ‘ Love knows no criminal Jealousy. Where
- ‘ Love

‘ Love is wanting, nothing that is done is good for
 ‘ any thing. On the contrary, where there is Love,
 ‘ every thing is good. Love makes the Heart glad,
 ‘ and raises it above terrestrial Things. Love is
 ‘ never idle, but always operates and always in-
 creases. Love is the Life of the Soul, and he that
 ‘ doth not love, doth not enjoy Life. Love requires
 ‘ no Reward, altho’ it deserves it. Love makes
 ‘ Mankind perfect: It supports every thing, and
 ‘ bears all things patiently, &c *.’

Here I make a Stop, dear *Isaac*, for there is another Page still of all the Attributes of Love. A Recollect Missionary, after having inserted this long Passage, in a Sermon, might add, *Love creates Cuckolds*; *Love debauches Girls*; *Love begets Bastards*; and, dear Sisters, *of all Things take care of Love*. Such a Passage wou’d not be the most impertinent in a Sermon.

Take care of thy Health, dear *Isaac*, and live content and happy.

* Amor confracta solidat, depressa sublevat, mutantem animum constanter reddit. Amor docet & addiscit, & inimicum nescit. Amor laudat, amor reprehendit. Amor prava suspicione caret. Ubi amor defuerit, nihil valet quidquid agitur. Contra omnia valent quæ cum amore aguntur. Amor hominem lætitificat, & à terrenis sublevat. Amor nunquam est otiosus, sed semper aliquid operatur, semper crescit & augetur. Amor vita est animæ, & qui non amat mortuus est. Verus amor non requirit premium et si mereatur.—Amor hominem perficit, omnia sustinet, omnia patienter portat, &c. *Idiotæ, Viri docti & sancti, Contemplationes de Amore Divino*, cap. i. num. 2.



LETTER XVII.

ISAAC ONIS, *a Rabbi at Constantinople*
to AARON MONCECA.

Constantinople —

If the Winds have been favourable to the Captain to whom I deliver'd my former Letter, thou must have receiv'd the Minutes which I sent to thee of *Osman Basha's* Secretary. I shall be impatient to hear thy Opinion of it. There were some very odd Notions in it; but it plainly discover'd that Hatred which the *Mahometans* and *Nazarenes* bear to the *Israelites*.

I have often reflected that our Law must be very good and very conformable to right Reason, since it is attack'd with so little Success. Those of all Religions write perpetually against us, and we never, or but very seldom return an Answer to the Works of our Adversaries. Notwithstanding our Silence, we lose few of our Brethren, and we seldom see any *Jews* that turn *Turks* or *Nazarenes*. It happens on the contrary, that the latter very often turn *Mahometans*; and these are still the less excusable, because nothing but meer Libertinism is their Motive for this Alteration.

I cannot imagine how a Man who has the first Ideas of meer Reason, can give the least Credit to *Mahomet's* Visions, and am even astonish'd that such as are born in that Religion, don't penetrate into the Ridicule of it, in spite of the Prejudices imbib'd in
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their Infancy. I know not whether thou hast ever examin'd the Chain of Impertinences that is form'd by the *Mahometan* Law. I defy the most distract'd and the greatest Enthusiaſts to produce any thing so chimerical and so monstrous. How is it possible for any Man to be so weak as to fancy that he shall taste Carnal Pleasures after Death ; that one of the chief Blessings which the Deity shall bestow on him, will be the Enjoyment of several Women, always Virgins ? 'Tis amazing how the Pagans could believe the Stories and Fables which their Poets told of the Elysian Fields, in which the Heroes were again to find Chariots, Arms, Horses and Crowns of Laurel * : But are not such Notions every whit as probable as the others ? Are the Punishments inflicted by the dark Angels any thing more or less than the plunging of Souls in *Tartarus* and *Phlegeton* ? Yet we are astonished every Day at the Credulity of the Pagans, and say nothing of that of the *Turks*, because Custom and Habit have made it familiar to us.

Besides the ridiculous part, the *Mahometan* Religion has something in it that is savage or rather brutish. The Weakness of the *Turks* to believe that a Statue shall demand a Soul in the other World from the Hands of the Sculptor, induc'd them to destroy all the antique Fragments which they met with in *Greece*. *Mahomet*, who was sensible that the *Belles Lettres* gave the Mind a certain Faculty of Penetration, was for shutting the Eyes of his Followers against every thing that might make them

* Arma procul, currusque virūm miratur inanes
 Stant terrā defixa hastæ, passimque soluti
 Per campos pascuntur equi, quæ gratia curruum
 Armorumque fuit vivis, quæ cura nitentes
 Pascere equos ; eadem sequitur tellure repostos.

Virg. Aeneid, lib. vi. ver. 707.
fin-

sensible of the Ridiculousness of his Precepts. He knew that his Religion could not bear the slightest Examination ; and therefore he forbade all manner of Disputation but with Sword in Hand. If such had been the Maxim of the *Nazarene* Monks, I question whether there would have been such a Multitude of different Opinions among them. The Doctors who disputed, only battled it with the Pen, while those who embraced their Party, cut one another's Throats, for Opinions which they did not understand.

The common People have at all times been liable to be seduc'd, easy to be deceiv'd, and difficult to be set right. They are fond of Novelty and always follow Objects that strike them. They are stopt and caught by outward Appearances ; it must be something uncommon which touches them. Plain Reason, stript of Chimaeras, appears too naked ; they are for something that is marvellous to fill their Imagination. 'Tis owing to this, that the Reveries of the Poets met with Belief among the *Pagans*, and that the *Mahometans* look upon the Fables of the *Ancoran* as true.

Yet notwithstanding the Absurdities of the *Turkish* Religion I will own to thee, that I think it contains Precepts worthy of the Admiration of the greatest Philosophers. That Charity which is so often enjoin'd in their Books, and the Pardon of their Enemies, are two Points which include the most refined Morality : But what they are most to be commended for, is, that they don't only believe those Maxims, but strictly practise them. Thou knowest how far their Charity extends to the Poor, insomuch that it is beforehand with their Necessities. There are few *Turks* but give considerable Alms in their Life-time, which are apply'd to the Relief of the Unfortunate. The Caravanseras, the

Wells, the Fountains, built upon the Road, for the Conveniency of Pilgrims and poor Travellers, of what Religion soever they be, are everlasting Monuments of the Goodness of the *Mahometans*. Their Compassion for the Miserable extends still farther. They have Hospitals for Incurables, for those that are maim'd, and for Lunatics. For the latter they even retain a sort of Veneration, and look upon them as Persons whom God has only depriv'd of the use of Reason, to give them the Opportunity of being the more free from Sin. If thou wast not thy self a *Constantinopolitan*, thou wouldst hardly believe that there are any *Turks* who leave Legacies on their Death-beds, to serve for the common Nourishment of the Dogs of their Quarter. This is really carrying Charity very far; but there are other Virtues to which they are not Strangers. There are few People who have a stricter Regard to their Promises; insomuch that they are Slaves to their Words, and the Difference of Religion does not serve them as a Pretext to deceive those with whom they have any worldly Dealings.

The Respect which the *Mahometans* pay to their Parents is worthy of Praise. At *Constantinople*, few of those Children are to be seen that make Nature blush, which is so common in the *Nazarene* Countries. The Head of a Family amongst the *Turks* preserves that Authority over his Children, which our antient Patriarchs had. The *Tartars* and the *Arabians* are still more zealous Observers of filial Obedience: But what I admire them most for, is, their Aversion to Calumny, insomuch, that 'tis a Rarity to hear them worrying one another's Reputation. They are ignorant of the Art of poisoning their Discourses; their Conversation is not made up of Slander, nor stuff'd with scandalous Tales. I have been considering what it is that guards them against

against this Vice ; for Men being very much alike in all Countries, I could not comprehend what it was that exempted the *Turks* from this Weakness, till I perceiv'd that it was owing to their Manners and way of Living. They have little Commerce with one another, unless in the Affairs of their Offices and Employments. We see none of their Houses set apart for the Harbour of illustrious Drones. They are ignorant of the Art of spending part of the Day shut up in an Assembly, to tell one another of the Adventures that happen'd the Night before. When they go to the Coffee-houses, which are the only public Places, they there drink Sherbet or other Liquors that are tolerated ; and sometimes, tho' rarely, they play at Chess, or at Mangala *, with all the Silence in the World, and soon after return home.

The Impossibility of seeing the Women is another substantial Reason why Backbiting prevails so little at *Constantinople*. The Ladies in *Europe* are the chief Fomenters of Calumny. Hatred, Jealousy, Ambition ; the Desire of obliging ; all these Passions, put them upon acting either against their Rivals, or against such Persons as may thwart their Views. 'Tis easy for them to draw in a great number of fine Fellows, who are zealous Admirers of their Whimsies, and Slaves to their Will and Pleasure. The Constraint under which the *Turkish* Women live, does not leave it in their Power to play the same Springs ; and the utmost they can do is to cabal in their Houses, and against their Rivals ; which can never be extended beyond the Precinct of their Habitation, and carry'd to the Knowledge of the Public.

* A *Turkish* Game, which they play with little Sheils,

The silent and taciturn Humour of the *Turks* is another Preservative against Slander. Great Bablers and Tell-tales are commonly inclin'd to this Vice. This is the Method they take to gain Attention; and the Heart of Man which is more addicted to Censure than Praise, is easily captivated with Slander. The *Nazarene* Beaus, who are mighty Boasters of their Occupation, are, as thou hast observ'd, very liable to this Failing.

That Candor for which the *Mahometans* are so much commended, has often put me upon serious Reflections. I will own to thee, dear *Aaron*, that I am touch'd to the quick, when I consider what will be their Fate after Death. I cannot help being concern'd for the Destruction of so many honest Men guilty of no other Crime than having follow'd the Prejudices of their Education, and given too blind a Belief to the Dreams of their Imans and Dervishes. The *Turkish* Monks here play the same Part as the *Nazarene* Monks. They deceive and cheat the Vulgar, fill their Heads with Chimæra's; and under the Veil of Religion give a Sancton to their Vices and disorderly Behaviour.

I will now tell thee a Story of a Dervish that happen'd when I was at *Adrianople*, which thou wilt find to be a just Parallel to those that thou writeſt to me sometimes concerning the *Nazarene* Fryars. This Dervish was retired to a Hermitage about half a League out of Town, where he stay'd whole Weeks together, without stirring out, and his Gate was always shut. It was said that he had Extasies at that time, during which time the Angel *Gabriel* came and talk'd with him familiarly. His Reputation increas'd far and near, People flock'd from all Parts to consult him, and a great many actually went to lodge with him. The Women, who had a great Curiosity to be acquainted with this holy Person, went

went to the Hermitage, and came away mightily edify'd : But these frequent Visits were what the jealous Temper of the Turks cou'd not brook, and the Husbands forbad their Wives to go to the Dervish any more ; upon which they went and complain'd to the Cadis, that their Husbands would not let them go to the holy Man : But the Judge would have nothing to say to it, and sent 'em home about their Business. This Affair made a Noise, and the Dervish being inform'd of it, resolv'd to improve it to his Advantage. He was very far from being that devout Man he pretended, as could be prev'd by above three of the Women that went to visit him. There was a Church-yard near his Hermitage, where he open'd the Tomb of a Man that had been lately interr'd, made a Eunuch of the Corpse, and hung up the dead Member in his Cell, near his Bed's Head, betwixt two Sentences of the Alcoran. This done, he wrapp'd himself up in his Cloak, and went to Bed. The first Persons that happen'd to visit him, perceiving the Spoil of this Operation, were in a great Surprize. *I was willing, said the Dervish, to prevent all Cause of Slander, and to put myself in a Capacity of instructing all the Fair Sex without Danger.* This Action of the Dervish doubled People's Esteem for him, and the Women were almost ready to stone their Husbands, that had given Occasion to this pious Deed of the Hermit. The Women now return'd in Crouds to visit him, of whom the Dervish undeceiv'd some, and the Husbands had no Suspicion of the Matter. He liv'd for many Years with a good Reputation ; but at length Jealousy undid him. The Wife of a Merchant, provok'd at the Preference which he gave to her Rival, accus'd him before the Cadis of attempting to ravish her. She told the Story of the Corpse, which the Hermit had imparted to her, in Confidence ; and offered,

if she was found in a Lye to submit to the severest Chastisement. The Dervish was thereupon order'd to be search'd; and it appeared he was very far from being an Eunuch. But the Judge gave order that he should undergo the real Operation as a Punishment for his Crime. So many were the Husbands who had Reason to complain, that they comforted one another; and for all their Jealousy, they would neither tell, nor hear any thing of the Matter. If fancy thou wilt be of Opinion that this Act of the Dervish is of a Par with the pious Frauds of the Monks. Sloth, Unserviceableness to the public Welfare; Hypocrify, Knavery, is all one between a *Nazarene* Fryar and a *Mahometan* Dervish.



LETTER XVIII.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS,
a Rabbi at Constantinople.

Paris ——

IN this Country Virtue alone will not ennoble a Family. A Descent from half a Score of Ancestors, whose Candor and Sincerity were deserving of the public Esteem, is not as good as that from a Father, who happens to be the King's Secretary. Nobility is purchas'd like Merchandise. A Farmer of the Revenue who is fatten'd with the Blood of the People, gets his Son a Nobleman's Title; where-

as

as the Son of an able Historian, or an eminent Poet, who often inherits the Talents of his Father, has no other Rank or Honours to pretend to, than those which are the Gift of *Apollo*. The most shining Merit, the most extensive Learning is not so good as the Employment of an Under-farmer, for attaining to Wealth and Grandeur. We see People every day at *Paris*, who at first setting out were but Lackeys, and are now drawn in fine Coaches, and lodg'd in magnificent Palaces. These Frolics of Fortune are very common here: But what will surprise thee is, that those Men who are look'd upon as the Scandal of the Nation, and the Instruments of the People's Misfortunes, meet with a great many Folks who debase themselves so low as to make their Court to them. Their Table, which is magnificently serv'd, draws a great many Parasites to it. The very Nobility seem to pay them Homage, a Complaisance to which they are forc'd for the Convenience of borrowing Money: Nay, they are sometimes so silly as to contract Alliances with those Financiers, the ill State of their Affairs obliging them to take a Step so unworthy of their Birth.

When a Farmer of the Revenue finds himself posseſ'd of great Wealth, he endeavours to purchase a young Woman of Quality. The Parents conclude the Marriage-Treaty. Miss is taken out of the Convent, and she is surpriz'd when she finds her Husband to be her Chamber-maid's Cousin. The Financier having a fresh Lustre added to him by this new Alliance, totally forgets his former Condition, as well as the Oppressions by which he acquir'd his Riches, and the Misfortunes he has brought upon the Widow and the Orphan; and talks of nothing now but of Nobility and antient Titles. He searches all the Registers, and has recourse to all the Notaries for Papers to prove the

Antiquity of his Family. He tells the World so much of his being a Person of Quality, that he, at last, believes it to be true: He finds Genealogists ready to write the History of his Family, and hungry Poets that prostitute their Pens in his Praise; and if he has a mind to be the Hero of an Epic Poem, 'tis but paying the Author well, and he shall be celebrated as *Achilles* and *Æneas*.

Such Honours, and so much Wealth, thrown away upon Persons so undeferving, is one of the Things that have most surpriz'd me at *Paris*. The *Mahometans* Way of Thinking is much more rational. With them Virtue is the only Step to Grandeur, and there is no other Nobility but what is acquir'd by Atchievements and Genius. The Son of a Vizier, if he be not worthy of an honourable Employment, often remains in Obscurity; while the Son of a Cobler, if he has Merit, may be promoted to that eminent Dignity. Consider, dear *Juan*, of how much more Service this Maxim is, to promote the Welfare of the Government and the Country. It animates all Subjects to render themselves worthy of Honours. It raises their Courage, by the Hopes of their being able to attain to the Highest Rank. They are incited to brave Deeds with the more Expectation and Resolution, because they know that the Obscurity of Birth is no Bar in their way to Honours. If the *French* lay so much Stress upon the Sentiments of their Nobility, what ought not the *Turks* to hope for, since the meanest *Mahometan* thinks and acts like a Nobleman, has the same Thirst after Glory, and the same Hopes of attaining to it? I know that sometimes a *Frenchman*, by some extraordinary Accident, is elevated from the Dregs of the People, to an eminent Degree, but it happens very seldom; for all Employments, all Honours, are engross'd by the Nobility; and 'tis by
meer

meer Chance, if ever a meer Plebeian clears all Obstacles out of the Way to his Fortune.

From these Reflections, I am led to give thee an Account of the different States whereof *France* is compos'd; which are the Clergy, the Nobility, and the common People. The Clergy, at the Head of whom are the Pontiffs *, are of the first Rank. The Nobility have the second, and the common People, who are represented by the Deputies of the Towns and Provinces, are of the lowest Order.

Heretofore Assemblies were held, consisting of all the three Bodies; and they were call'd the *States-General*: These, jointly with their Sovereign, had under their Consideration such Matters as were thought necessary for the Good of the Country, and were as a Balance between the Court and the Subjects: But by degrees the Court abolish'd those Assemblies; for they having the sole Power of calling them together, avoided it, and made their Authority supply the room of the Ordinances of those States; by which means their sole Will and Pleasure were of as much Validity as the Decisions of the whole Nation. The Division of the three Bodies that represented it, was one of the chief Things that favour'd the Sovereigns in their Project. The Clergy's Hatred of the Nobility, and the Envy which both met with from the common People, became the chief Instrument of yoking the *French*.

This Disunion is not yet at an end, nor has Time been able to heal it. The Ambition of the Pontiffs, their Thirst for Dominion is a Tyranny which seems insupportable to the Nobility, who are sorry to see Dignities and Posts of Eminence fill'd by Persons that are their Enemies, repine at the

* The Bishops,

Power

Power of the Clergy, and whose Hatred is the greater, in proportion to the Credit of their Enemies. The common People, for their part, are charm'd at the Mortification of the Nobility, and are pleas'd to see those humbled that despise them. The more the Nobility is depress'd, the more freely do the common People seem to breathe ; and the Yoke laid on the Necks of the one becomes an Ease to the Captivity of the others.

Besides these, there are other venerable Bodies *, which are not included, either among the Nobility or among the common People. These are the Tribunals which administer Justice. They preserve something still of their antient Splendor ; and 'tis by their Canal that the common People are also permitted to lay their Calamities and Misfortunes at the Feet of their Sovereign ; but their Access to the Throne is often forbid. An Order from the superior Tribunal stops their Mouths † : They have no Prerogative to plead for the People, farther than they are permitted by that Tribunal ; and tho' their antient Privileges were much more extensive, they have been in this point restrain'd.

These Bodies call'd the *Parliaments* are always in direct Opposition to the sovereign Pontiffs and the subalterns too. As they are the sole Depositaries of the Remains of the Liberty of their Church, they are always upon their Guard against the Invasions of *Rome*, and the Decrees that issue from it ||. This Attention draws upon them the Hatred of most of the Pontiffs, who are very much attach'd to their Head ; and there's an eternal Misunderstanding betwix them. The late Duke Regent, when he

* The Parliaments. † The Privy-Council. || The Bulls.

took the Reins of Government upon him, made a dexterous use of this Disunion. In order to amuse the Parliaments, at the Beginning of his Administration, he cunningly deliver'd up some Pontiffs into their Hands, and seem'd to approve of the Punishment and Severity which they oblig'd the Persons and Writings of some of them to undergo *. When he had obtain'd what he aim'd at of the Parliaments, he oppress'd them too, in their turn; for he even banish'd the Members, and carried his despotic Power farther than any sovereign Prince. The Pontiffs were glad to see the Misfortunes of their Enemies, and forgot their own Injuries at the Sight of those which were done to the Parliaments.

No Men take a greater Pleasure in Revenge than the Ecclesiastics, who let slip no Opportunity of hurting their Antagonists, it being one of their darling Vices; yet they live very regularly, nor is there any thing disorderly in their Behaviour; and if Hatred and Ambition were but banish'd from their Hearts, they would be guilty of few material Faults. What I say relates meerly to the Pontiffs and Priests; for as to the Monks, they are the Sink of all Vices, the Lives of most of them being as scandalous as that of the others seem regular. Sometimes the Pontiffs too have their human Frailities; but to do them Justice, this is a Case that seldom happens.

A Story is current here to this Purpose, which I think a very pleasant one. 'Tis affirm'd, that a Pontiff of the Province of *Auvergne*, writing to his Mistress and to the Prime Minister, made a Mistake in the Superscription of his Letters, and directed the Minister's Letter to his Mistress, and his Mistress's

* The Bishop of *Apt*, whose Mandate was burnt; and Temporalities seiz'd.

to the Minister.' The latter return'd him for Answer to the Letter which he had receiv'd (wherein the Pontiff said, *that he had wrote to old Eminency for obtaining a Permission to return to Paris*) that the King commanded him to stay at home till further Orders, and that old Eminency advis'd him to better Manners. The Story pass'd here for Truth; nevertheless I cannot assure thee that 'tis exactly as they give it out. The Blunder of this Pontiff is very diverting, and the Laughers have made themselves merry with it: But the Man has this to comfort him, that the first News which flies about *Paris* will drown the Remembrance of his Stupidity.

Tales and Stories succeed one another in this Place like the Waves of the Sea; so that what is the Subject of Conversation one Day, is dropp'd the next. The fickle Humour of this Nation does not dwell long upon one Topic; and a Week hence, the Adventure which I have been mentioning to thee, will be look'd upon as old as if it had happen'd in the Time of *Francis I.*

I am continuing to inform myself of every thing that is capable of giving me just Ideas of the State of Learning in this Kingdom; and am also examining the Progress of the Arts and Sciences in it, which have better Helps and Accommodations at *Paris* than in any other Place in the World. *Lewis XIV.* made such Establishments, that he fix'd them there for ever. I told thee, in my Letters, of three Academies, where all the Sciences are taught. The first consists of the famous Painters, Sculptors, &c. The second of skilful Architects. The third of Musicians. There are Prizes which the King causes to be distributed in the two former, to reward those who distinguish themselves by their Merit, and to encourage others to arrive at Perfection in their Talents. These Establishments are worthy of a Sovereign,

reign, whose Grandeur is demonstrated by nothing more, than by the Tranquility and Ease which the Sciences enjoy under Favour of his Protection. The Glory of a Prince, who causes the Arts to flourish, reflects a Lustre upon the whole Nation, it being an Honour in which both are Sharers.

Lewis XIV. not content with having procur'd his Subjects all the Helps for their excelling in Painting, Carving and Architecture, establish'd an Academy at *Rome**, where they who gain'd the Prizes at *Paris*, were maintain'd for three Years at the Expence of the Prince; they work under the Eyes of a skilful Director, and go, like Bees, to suck Honey from the choicest Flowers, to enrich their Hive.

I have had a Letter from *Moses Rodrigo*, who will send me the Books I desir'd of him from *Amsterdam*, and as soon as I have receiv'd them I will forward them to *Marseilles*. I desir'd him to write to me his Opinion about the most eminent modern Authors, and the new Works that they shall publish; by which means I may be enabled to send thee every good Piece that comes out in *Holland*, and in *England*.

Preserve thy Health, dear *Isaac*, which is the most valuable Benefit that Heaven can grant us; and when it adds Riches into the Bargain, our Happiness is perfect.

* 'Tis still subsisting.



LETTER XIX.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS,
a Rabbi, at Constantinople.

Paris—

THE Books I expected from *Holland* are just come to hand. *Moses Rodrigo* sent them by the way of *Roan*, and I shall take the first Opportunity to forward them to *Marseilles*; where our Correspondent will take care to ship them for *Constantinople*. Together with the Books he has sent an Account, as I had desir'd, of the Authors, of whose Works I may, perhaps, make a Purchase. I thought it so exact and clear, that I send thee the following Copy of it.

A LITERARY DISSERTATION..

‘ I now prepare, with all the Exactness possible,
‘ to discharge the Commands you laid upon me.
‘ ’Tis the very same Case here as at *Paris*. The *Belles-Lettres* and good Authors have their Times and Seasons, which are some more favourable to them than another. What is very singular is, that there seems to have been a certain Sympathy between France and Holland, so that one would swear those different States have had Genius's sublime and inferior at one and the same time.’
‘ In the last Century, and at the Beginning of the present, there was a good number of learned Men

Men of the first Rank in *France*: But *Holland* pretended to the Advantage of having more than *France*; the Truth of which Fact will be plainly prov'd by comparing the one with the other.

One vast profound universal Genius (1) was the firmest Pillar of his Religion. With the same Pen with which he combated his Enemies (2), he defeated such Adversaries as he had among those of his own Opinion (3).

This great Man was oppos'd by a sublime and righteous Genius (4), who, notwithstanding the Darkness of the remotest Ages of Antiquity, un-veil'd the Customs of past Centuries; and tho' they could not agree together, they own'd, however, that if either of them could be convinc'd, the other was the only Person capable to convince him.

Much about the same time, *France* had also several other great Men. A Bishop (5), who was a great Orator, a good Historian, a subtle Divine, forc'd his most cruel Enemies to do justice to his Merit.

Another Prelate (6), whose Candour, Virtue and Sincerity were equal to his Learning, form'd Lectures for the Education of Kings, and the Happiness of their People. He follow'd the Antients; but he went beyond his Models, and was more an Original than those whom he copy'd.

One Philosopher (7) has in two small Volumes compriz'd many more Secrets of Nature and Experimental Philosophy, than were taught in a thousand Years before, and in an immense Collection of unwieldy Volumes; and being the Disciple of the Restorer of sound Philosophy (8), he was ca-

1. Arnauld. 2. The Calvinists. 3. The Jesuits. 4. Claude. 5. M. de Meaux. 6. M. de Cambray. 7. Rohault. 8. Des Cartes.

‘ pable, by the help of his Master’s Lessons, to explain the Reason of Ancient Prejudices.

‘ Another Metaphysician (1) search’d after Truth by his profound Studies; and if he did not make a full Discovery of it, he had it, however, often in View, and extended his Knowledge to the utmost Pitch which Human Frailty is capable of attaining.

‘ At the Time that these illustrious Genius’s flourish’d in *France*, *Holland* had Authors who were not inferior to them. The first (2) was an universal Genius, a learned Philosopher, an able Critic, and had vast Abilities: He had Enemies to cope with, who were stirred up against him by his Reputation, his Sincerity, and the Freedom of his Pen: But by his Merit and by his Science he vanquish’d them; so that some (3) were ashamed that they had ever attack’d him, and the others (4) were mortify’d that they could not prejudice him.

‘ Another Author (5), an ingenious Censor, of a delicate and penetrating Genius, was an agreeable Critic.

‘ A third Writer (6) made the Proofs of Religion plain to the meanest Capacities; and was the first that ventur’d to prove the Truths of Revelation, from the single Authority of Reason.

‘ About the Time when Death depriv’d *Holland* of these great Men, *France* also lost the superior Genius’s that I have been speaking of. There still remain’d some that merited a distinguished Rank in the Republic of Letters, but the number was small. It was surprizing to see what a Va-

1. Mallebranche. 2. Bayle. 3. Jurieu. 4. Jaquelot, Bernard and Le Clerc. 5. Basnage de Beauval. 6 Abbadie.

‘ cuum was made by the Loss of so many learned Men. The Sciences seem’d to have lost their Torch by which they gave Light to the human Understanding. It was believ’d that when the Fates had cut off the few great Men that were still remaining, Nature was too much exhausted to be able to form more such: But afterwards People began to take heart; and it was demonstrated by Experience, that if all Ages did not produce an equal number of superior Genius’s, there were still some that succeeded as others died. In France there were several Men of Learning, that distinguish’d themselves by their Merit; and in Holland there arose some worthy to succeed to the Glory of the former.

‘ s’ *Gravesande* the famous Philosopher, the Disciple and Rival of *Newton* has lately publish’d, *An excellent Introduction to Philosophy; containing Metaphysics and Logic.*

‘ *Barbeyrac*, the learned Translator of the Works of *Puffendorf* and *Grotius*, has enrich’d the Republic of Letters with several very useful Books.

‘ *La Chapelle* worthily supplies the place of the *Drelincourts* and the *Claudes*. All the Works written by his Pen are full of Learning, and that sort of it which has nothing in it disgusting. He has all the Talents, and all the rare Qualities of the Learned without having their Faults.

‘ *Roussel* treats of every thing relating to Politics, the Interests of Princes, &c. in a just, rational and profound manner.

‘ There are other Writers too in *Holland*, whose Works deserve to be read; but the number of the Men of Learning is not near so great as it was twenty Years ago. Not that the Number of Writers is less now than it was then; and if the composing of Rhapsodies be sufficient to denote a Genius.

nius, there were never so many Wits in this Country, as now.

‘ One Man, compell’d by Poverty (1), writes a sorry Book, wherein he censures another Author as deserving the Pillory; and yet his Criticism is worse than the Book it condemns.

‘ Another, tir’d with selling Packets of Counter-poisons, and with the Business of a Mountebank, graces himself with the Title of a Physician (2); and under the Shelter of that Name, he thinks he may with Impunity surfeit the Public by his Works, as he did formerly by the scurvy Harangues which he made upon the Stages that he erected in the public Places and Cross-ways.

‘ A quondam Exciseman (3) takes it into his head to commence Author: He composes some wretched Histories and some *Memoirs Historical and Political*, which are Books written in the Taste and Stile of the Works of *La Serre* and *Neuf-Germain*.

‘ A Monk, got loose from St. Victor, has had the assurance to undertake the Continuation of *Rapin Thoyras’s History of England*; and has taken for his Assistants a strolling Comedian, and a travelling Jesuit, that are Refugees in Holland. What Good cou’d be expected from such a Coalition? It has indeed produc’d what the Men of Sense really expected, and the Continuation of the *History of Rapin Thoyras*, is the most pitiful Libel that has been published for a long time. Impudence, Falsehood and Ignorance, seem to be contending in the Rhapsody, for the Dishonour of staining all the Pages.

1. The Apology against the Parody of *Alcibiades*.
2. The Author of *Anecdotes Historiques, Galantes & Literaires*.
3. The Author of *Memoires Historiques & Politiques*.

‘ A Man, who was heretofore a Comedian, till
 ‘ he stepp’d from the Theatre to the Anti-chamber
 ‘ of a Nobleman, being more disgusted at his real
 ‘ Character of a Domestic, than he was elated at
 ‘ being, in Imagination, a *Trojan* or a *Roman Prince*,
 ‘ has taken it into his Head, for several Years past,
 ‘ to turn Author; but he composes his Works much
 ‘ in the same manner as he us’d to copy his Parts;
 ‘ for he picks some Scraps out of Books, and from
 ‘ those plunder’d Passages he patches up a Rhapsody,
 ‘ to which he puts his Name.

‘ There are many Authors in this Country, who
 ‘ only write for Bread. Hunger and Thirst are the
 ‘ Muses that inspire them. With them, half a do-
 ‘ zen Lines is the Purchase of a Loaf, and the more
 ‘ Sheets of Paper that they stain, the better Title
 ‘ they have to the Kitchen. Be their Books good
 ‘ or bad, the Booksellers find a way to put them
 ‘ off, it being of little or no Concern to them how
 ‘ much the public Taste is vitiated and corrupted
 ‘ by such a Number of insipid Writings. They
 ‘ can’t dispose of their Reams of white Paper to such
 ‘ as are continually calling for new Books; and
 ‘ therefore they give them Romances written stiffly,
 ‘ without Conduct and without Character; Poetry
 ‘ which *Apollo* never dictated, and Histories com-
 ‘ pos’d at random.

‘ There is a certain Author that fancies his Busi-
 ‘ ness to be like that of a Mason: He makes a Book
 ‘ as the other builds a Wall; so many Feet of Ma-
 ‘ sonry so many Crowns, so many Quires so many
 ‘ Florins. The Mason makes three Fathom the
 ‘ Measure of his Day’s Work, and the Author settles
 ‘ his at so many printed Sheets; and ’tis all one to
 ‘ him, if he does but fill his Paper.

‘ I hope that the Books I have now sent to thee,
 ‘ are not in the Number of those that are written
 ‘ after this manner ; for I have endeavour’d to pick
 ‘ out those only which I believe to be the best.’

I know not, dear *Isaac*, how thou relishest the Characters given in the abovemention’d *Dissertation*. As for those of the Authors some time since departed, I think they are very just. Thou hast read some of their Works, and therefore will be the better enabled to judge of them thyself. As sooir as thou hast read the new Books, let me know thy Sentiments.

I have often reflected upon the great Number of illustrious Men that have flourish’d in some Reigns, and the few that have been produc’d in others. Can it be possible for Nature to be exhausted ? and does it require Ages to prepare Matter capable of forming the Head of a *Des Cartes* or of a *Newton*? Have the Souls of Men different Qualities at one time from another ? There is no supporting such Theses without an Absurdity. The Question wou’d then be to know, whether Trees are bigger in some Centuries than they are in others. Nature does not act different in her Operations. What, did she forget for 2000 Years, after what manner she form’d the Brains of *Sophocles* and *Euripides*, till she call’d it to Memory by the Construction of those of the two famous French Poets, *Corneille* and *Racine*?

To account clearly for the Deficiency and Failure of superior Genius’s, recourse must be had to other Reasons than the Impotency of Nature. In every Age she forms an equal Number of Persons, to whom she grants the Ability of rising to the Grand and the Sublime ; but these Talents must be cultivated. What can a Land produce, be the Soil ever so good,

if

if it lie fallow? 'Tis with our Souls as with a Field, which only produces the Grain that is sown in it. I have told thee after what manner the Youth study, and how little Profit they reap from it. Besides, Glory and Emulation are the first Springs of the Sciences. And when the Desire of attaining to Immortality is not supported by Praise, by Rewards, and by the Esteem of the Public, those Virtues languish, and seem as it were in a Lethargy.

In *Lewis* the XIVth's Time, as well as in the *Augustan Age*, People had no Notion of that strange Inequality which there now seems to be thought between a great Poet or an excellent Historian, and a Man who has no Merit to recommend him but a long Train of Ancestors. Virtue and Learning were rewarded in all Ranks of People, and the Monarch, who was in love with Merit, darted his Favours down to the remotest Corners. The Court, in servile Imitation of the Vices and Virtues of the Sovereign, cultivated and favoured the Sciences, tho' perhaps without any Affection for them. Under the present Reign the Muses are also protected. The Monarch is the Successor, not only to his Grandfather's Virtues, but to his good Taste; but Wars, Disturbances and Negotiations have hinder'd the Arts from being cultivated as they were heretofore. The Courtiers, who think of nothing but Horses, Arms, Sieges and Battles *, have forgot that the greatest of the *Roman Captains* was the most learned Man in the Republic. The Ecclesiastics exasperated against each other by vain Disputes, are taken up with Writings of no manner of Use to the Instruction of Posterity, and such as are disgusting to all Men of Sense that are now living. Good Taste

* This Letter was written in that Campaign which succeeded the Siege of *Philipburg*.

is in a great measure vanish'd, and nothing can revive it but Peace, Union and Tranquility.

Fare thee well, dear *Isaac*, and condole with me for the Vicissitudes which have attended the Sciences.



LETTER XX.

AARON MONCECA to JACOB BRITO.

Paris —

I Received thy Letter, dear *Jacob*, with Pleasure, and think thy Parallel betwixt antient and modern *Rome* very judicious. Thou might'st have carried it farther, and compar'd the spiritual Power of modern *Rome* in *Europe*, to the sovereign Power it had in Days of Yore. Upon this Occasion I have heard a learned Man of this Country maintain a very singular and merry Hypothesis. He pretends, that in the Centre of *Rome*, at the Time of its Foundation, a Talisman was buried, assuring it of perpetual Power over *Europe*, as long as the Charm lasted ; and that the Talisman not being taken away nor destroy'd at the Time when that City was sack'd and burnt, it has regain'd its Dominion over the greatest Part of the *European* World. In opposition to this I observ'd, there was a Difference betwixt the Sovereignty of the old *Romans* and of the Moderns. To which he answer'd me, That the Talisman did not regulate the sort of Power, but only secur'd the sovereign Power to it ; and that it could not be denied but the Pontiff actually had such

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Authority over the *Nazarene* States, by the absolute Power which they granted him in Spirituals; since the greatest Kings being subjected to certain Principles of Religion, and to certain Usages, were obliged to conform thereto in spite of their Teeth, and cou'd not be dispense'd therefrom without leave of the Pontiff. As I saw the Gentleman who maintain'd the Reality of the pretended Talisman was wedded to his Opinion, I thought myself oblig'd to have recourse to more philosophical Reasons to dissuade him from his Mistake.

I have met, dear *Jacob*, with a great many People who firmly believ'd the Power of the Talismans. Several of our Rabbies seem to favour this Opinion, the Falshood of which is plainly demonstrable by sound Philosophy. 'Twill be easy for me to give thee a clear Proof of the Truth of my Opinion.

'Tis a sure Principle, That nothing but Matter can act upon Matter. I say nothing of the incomprehensible Mystery of the Action of our Soul on the Body, the Power of which Operation, I think, ought to be ascrib'd to a perpetual Miracle wrought by the Author of Nature. Now, if the Principle, that a Body cannot be put into Motion but by the Impulsion of another Body, be evident, how is it possible that a Thing which cannot act, which has no Power over another Thing, can communicate any Virtue to it? No Talisman, Charm or Enchantment, can act without determining the Thing upon which it should operate, to make some sort of Motion or other. How then can a Clod of Earth or Copper, of the Size of one's Hand, which has certain whimsical Characters engrav'd on it, make an Impression on a *Frenchman* 300 Leagues from the Spot, and inspire him with that Humility, or that

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Submission which is necessary to the Orders of the Pontiff?

Besides, the bare Operation of Matter upon Matter, is not sufficient to make the Enchantment take Effect; 'tis necessary, moreover, that the Charm have the Power of directing the Intention, and disposing the Mind to Obedience; which would be an Absurdity to grant. For those pretended Love-Philtres which are given by certain Quacks, who would fain be cry'd up for Conjurers, can never determine the Will of the Soul. Those Wretches make up certain Draughts, which, by heating the Blood, dispose the Mind to Love, and excite it to Concupiscence. There are several Plants and Animals, whose Juice promotes Agitations in us, but they who make use of it are not determin'd to one Object more than another. 'Tis true, it often happens, that a Woman to whom they give a Dose of those pretended Philtres, yields to her Lover, and the Reason is plain. In those Moments when the Body, by its Situation, does not leave the Soul the Means of acting with entire Liberty, the Mind is naturally captivated by such Objects as most strike it. The State to which those Liquids reduce the Body, being a sort of Slumber, the Ideas with which it is most commonly mov'd, are always present to the Imagination; in the same manner as in a Dream, we often review the Objects that took up our Attention in the Day.

If the Will of Man was possibly to be determined by Philtres, it would necessarily follow, That they who had the Secret of compounding them, would have the Power which is reserv'd to God alone. They would be the Lords and Masters of Nature; they wou'd be the Dispensers of both Good and Evil; because a Man could not contract Guilt by Actions which he was forc'd to commit, and to which

which his Soul was determined by a superior Motion. Besides, humanly speaking, Matter can only act upon Matter ; consequently Love-Potions cannot act directly upon the Will. They may, indeed, by stirring the Springs of the Body, where Nature has fix'd its Correspondence with the Soul, sooth it, make it feel Pain ; and in short, give it all the Sensations : But after all, 'tis indirectly, and by means only of the Body whereon they act. Now, as they only operate secondarly, and by means of another Mover, it would be ridiculous to assert, that they could have any more Power than it ; and I don't believe that any body supposes that our Bodies and our Organs determine our Will. If it be true, therefore, that Philtres cannot determine our Souls, much more improbable is it, that the Talismans have this Power, because they don't act even materially ; and have not the Advantage that other Charms have. What Power has the Figure of a Triangle, or the ranging of certain Letters together, over Matter ? What Impulsion, what Motion can all the Hieroglyphics of the antient *Egyptians* have upon the Brain of a Man ? Indeed my dear *Brite*, when I consider the Chimæras and Errors of the Cabalists, nothing seems to me so ridiculous as their Opinions.

The Disciples of Judicial Astrology are a People also fed with Chimæras, and stuff'd with Imaginations. If this Art was true, Nature's Hands wou'd be ty'd up, and ours wou'd be bound too. All our Motives would be written in the Heavens, and no Freedom would be left us to act. We should be necessitated to do Evil as well as Good, since we should be absolutely oblig'd to do what wou'd be written in the pretended Register of the Stars ; or else the Book would be false, and the Science of the Conjurors uncertain.

Our Fate depends upon Places, Persons, Times and our Wills, and not upon the chimerical Conjunctions of Quacks. Two Men happen to be born under the same Planet; the one is a Water-Carrier, and the other a Monarch. From whence then comes this Difference? *Jupiter* would have it so, the Astrologer will say. But who is this *Jupiter*? 'Tis an unknown Body which can only act by his Influence. From whence then comes it that it acts so differently at the same Juncture, and in the same Climate? How can this Influence have Effect? How can it pierce thro' the vast Extent of Air? An Atom, the minutest Portion of Matter, stops, diverts, diminishes those pretended Particles, which 'tis pretended those Planets send to us. Besides, do the Stars always influence, or do they only influence upon certain Occasions? If they influence only at certain Conjunctions, and when the Particles which break off from them come to light upon us, how can the Astrologer know the precise Time when this happens, in order to determine what will be their Effect? And if the Influences are continual how can they be speedy enough to penetrate thro' the vast Spheres of Air, to force the Matter that retarded or diverts them, and to accommodate themselves to the Vivacity of our Passions, from whence the principal Actions of our Lives arise? For if the Stars regulate all our Sentiments, and all our Proceedings, their Influences must necessarily act with as much Rapidity as our Will, since it is by them determin'd.

In truth, dear *Jacob*, I am surpriz'd that Men should be so weak as to give into such ridiculous Visions. All Fortune-tellers ought to be drove out of a well-govern'd State, and such pretended Conjurers should be severely chastis'd. They deserve the same Punishment as Poisoners. They impose
on

on abundance of credulous People, and propagate among the Vulgar a Heap of Superstitions, contrary to Reason and the Public Tranquillity *. Some of these Wretches have happen'd to be the Dupes of their own Credulity, and have really believ'd the Impostures they gave out to be true.

Gassendi was an Eye-witness of the Distraction of one of these pretended Conjurers. That Philosopher being at a Village, to which he went to unbend his Mind from Study, saw a Croud of Peasants carrying along a Shepherd, bound Hand and Foot. His Curiosity prompted him to ask what the Man had done whom they were carrying to Prison. *Sir,* reply'd one of the Country-Men, *He is a Sorcerer. We have apprehended him, and are going to carry him to Justice.*

The Philosophical Ideas of *Gassendi* were rous'd at this Word *Sorcerer*. 'Twas a very agreeable Pleasure to him to examine privately the Fables that are plac'd to the score of those Impostors. He order'd the Peasants to carry the Man to his House, and to deliver him into his Hands. As he had a great Influence over the Country People, they did not hesitate to obey him. *Friend*, says he to the Conjurer, when he was all alone with him, *If thou hast made any Contract with the Devil, own it ingenuously. If thou confessest thy Crime, I will restore thee to Liberty; but if thou art obstinately silent, I will surrender thee again into the Hands of the Provost.* *Sir,* reply'd the Shepherd, *I confess to you, that I go daily to the nocturnal Meetings. An Acquaintance of mine gave me some Balm to be swallowed, and I have been admitted a Sorcerer almost three Years.* *Gassendi* inform'd himself exactly how this pretended Magician

* Genus Hominum, Potentibus infidum, Sperantibus fallax. *Tacit. Hist. lib. 1.*

was admitted, who talk'd to him of all the Devils, as if they had been acquainted all their Life-time. *But*, said *Gaffendi* to him, *I must see the Drug that thou takest to go to the infernal Assembly, I will go with thee thither this Evening.* You may do as you please, replied the Shepherd, *I will carry thee thither as soon as the Midnight-Bell has rung.*

When the Hour was arriv'd, *Come*, says *Gaffendi*, now 'tis time for us to be gone. The Magician pull'd out of his Pocket, a Box, in which there was a sort of Opiate. He took as much of it himself as amounted to the Bigness of a Nut, and gave as much to the Philosopher, bidding him swallow it, and then lie down near the Chimney, assuring him, that in a very little Time the Devil would come in the Shape of a great Cat, to carry him to the nocturnal Meeting; and that the Sorcerers were used to repair to their Assemblies mounted on such Steeds.

Gaffendi having receiv'd the Ointment, pretended he could not take it without some Vehicle to make it more palatable, and going into a Closet by his Bed-Chamber, he put a few Sweetmeats into a Pot, which he cover'd with a Wafer, and then returning to the Shepherd, he said, *Come, I am ready to go with thee. We will both lie down upon the Floor in this Posture*, said the Conjuror, *and take our Balm.* They stetch'd themselves both upon the Ground near the Chimney, when the Philosopher swallow'd his Sweet-meats, and the Sorcerer his usual Drug; and in a few Minutes time he seem'd to be stupid, and like a Man intoxicated. He slept, and during his Slumber he talk'd all the time, and said a thousand extravagant things. He convers'd with all the Devils, and talk'd with his Comrades, whom he took to be Magicians, as well as himself. After four or five Hours Slumber

he

he awoke, and found himself in the very same Place where he had laid himself down. *Well,* said he to *Gaffendi, I hope you lik'd your Reception by the Goat. You had great Honour done you to be indulged on the very first Day of your Admittance, to kiss his Posteriors.* And then he told all the Stories relating to those pretended nocturnal Meetings.

Gaffendi, in pity to the unhappy Man's Condition, shew'd him his Error, and in his Presence made an Experiment of his Balm upon a Dog, which, having swallowed it, immediately fell asleep. The Shepherd was then set at liberty, and probably he undeceived his Brethren, who believ'd the same Impostures.

H heretofore these pretended Magicians were burnt in *France.* The Priests, who gave out they had a Right to dispossess Devils, and who gain'd great Credit by this Prerogative, favour'd this Opinion. All were then Demoniacs and Persons possess'd with evil Spirits; all Places were full of Inchantments, insomuch that it resembled the Age of *Amadis:* But by degrees the Falshood was detected, the Cloud which eclips'd the Truth was dispers'd, and no more Credit was given to those Impostures. Several Parliaments determined that there was no such Thing as Sorcerers, and having try'd some of those Impostors, punish'd them as Cheats, and not as Magicians. The Behaviour of Men of Sense open'd the Eyes of many People: And indeed, the Credit of Astrologers, Magicians and Fortune-tellers, extends no farther than the silly Women and the Vulgar.

Farewell, dear *Jacob,* and bewail with me the Weakness of the Common People.



LETTER XXI.

AARON MONCECA to JACOB BRITO.

Paris —————

HAVING given a full Answer to the first Articles of thy last Letter, I will now impart to thee the Reflections which I made upon the others.

If thou did'st but live at *Paris*, and wast acquainted with the Behaviour of the Women at the Opera, thou would'st not blame the *Romans* for not suffering them at their Entertainments. Thou exclaimest about three hundred Courtezans that are at *Rome*, and against the Severity of depriving Men of the Happiness of being Fathers, that they may have finer Voices, and thereby supply the want of singing Women. I don't approve of these Customs; yet I'll maintain they are not so pernicious to the State as the Women at the Opera. Two Women that dance or that sing in the Chorus's cause more Disturbance and Scandal, make more Bankruptcies among the Merchants, bring more Gentlemen into Debt, and filch more from the Children of Families, than the three hundred Whores of whom thou complainest; and if thou do'st but examine thoroughly what I am going to say, thou wilt easily be convinc'd of the Truth of it.

Who

Who are the People that keep Company with the common Women in the Street *Longare*, and that of *la Serena*? Few Persons who have good Fortunes, or are born of good Families, debase themselves so far as to be drawn into such Excesses. If they happen to make a Visit to the Women of that Cast, their Correspondence with 'em is of no Continuance, and cannot prejudice either their Honour or their Fortune. The common People, such as are of obscure Extraction, some debauch'd Burghers may happen to fall into their Snares, tho' this too does not happen often. The Abhorrence that attends the infamous Profession of Prostitutes, is a Preservative against their Allurements and their Charms. The Notion which the Public has of their Character, renders them less pernicious to Society; for that Vice is generally hated which cannot put on the Appearances of Virtue. Dissimulation and Craft are the Talents in which the Women at the Opera excel most, and their Profession gives them an Opportunity of seeing good Company. They can put on a disguised Countenance, and an Air of Modesty to cover an Appetite greedy after Riches, and destitute of all Sentiments of Virtue, which they look upon as a troublesome Curb. Their Behaviour is amiable, and Vice is with them like to a Serpent hid in a Basket of Flowers. They who by long Acquaintance know their Maxims, are not to be captivated with those external Charms. They know too well the Bottom of their Hearts to be the Duples of their Cunning: But a Number of young Fellows without Experience, and old Men without Judgment, fall into the Snares which are laid for them. They are the more difficult to be escaped, because these sort of Women can assume what Character they please. *Proteus* could not disguise himself

self in a greater Variety of Shapes, than a Woman at the Opera.

If she has a mind to bubble an old Man, she affects a sovereign Contempt for all young Fellows, and clamours against the Folly of those Women who abandon themselves to the Indiscretion of a giddy-headed Fellow. She commends the Prudence of a Man in Years, and protests that she could have no Liking to any Man whose Judgment was not ripen'd by Age.

On the contrary, when she has a mind to oblige any young Fellow, whoever is past thirty Years of Age, is sure to be the Object of her Banter. None but the Youth have the Power to charm. How is it possible to be in love with an old Man? What Taste can there be in a Lover threescore Years old? She dances, she sings, she dallies; and one would swear that all the Graces and Pleasures have fix'd their Residence in her Person.

If she turn her Eyes toward a rich Farmer of the Revenue, then she plays a different Part; she affects a Contempt for every Man that is not rich. *What signifies*, said she to a Farmer-General who feeds her with Money, *the Friendship of young Gentlemen?* *They rob a Woman of her Character, and ruin her, instead of being able to maintain her.* *Can a Woman of Sense take a Fancy to a Man, because he sees the King, is a Colonel, and makes a Bow with a good Grace?* *I swear to you*, adds she, *that the good Behaviour of a Man is much more engaging, who knows how to make proper Presents, and to procure that Ease which is necessary for the Happiness of Life.*

Thou seest, dear Brito, how difficult it is to avoid being bubbled by those dangerous Syrens. They have greater Advantages than those in fabulous History, who only seduc'd by the Ear: But these

these charm both by the Ears * and the Eyes †. When a Man has been so unhappy as to fall into the Snare of these Enchantresses, he is ruin'd, and shut up in a Labyrinth, out of which he never finds his Way. Cunning, Fraud, false Oaths, Dissimulation, counterfeited Despair, and the false Assurance of everlasting Love are the Bye-Paths, thro' which he can never return.

The Opera-Women have the peculiar Talent of keeping a Heart in Chains. If they perceive that Enjoyment and Tranquility render their Gallants less eager than before, they have the Art of giving them a proper Dose of Jealousy, which by the way is so well counterballanc'd, that they are not afraid of Vexation's doing what might have been done by Inconstancy: For if they find their Gallants have a Suspicion of their Fidelity, they immediately drown themselves in Tears, and bind their Love with the most solemn Oaths; and if they see that their Tears have not the expected Effect, they abandon themselves to Despair, so that one would think their Lives very precarious, and the Rage they are possess'd with dangerous. Their Lover cannot stand the Test of so violent a Passion, but readily retracts, owns he was in the wrong, and adds new Links to his Chain.

The Opera Women are excellent also, in the Art of ruining their Lovers by the Contributions which they raise upon them in the Name of Presents. This is a Science of which they are perfect Mistresses. They have made a regular Art of their Rapine, of which the old Singers in Chorus's are the Professors, who teach its Precepts and Maxims to the New-comers. When they have a mind to a Diamond, a

* Singing. † Dancing.

Garment, a Head of *English Lace*, they artfully commend some Jewel or some Ornament which they have seen worn by such or such a Lady of their Acquaintance. ‘ The Marquis de ***, say they, ‘ has made a Present of a Diamond to *Hermansa*, ‘ and the Count de *** has given a fine Habit to ‘ *Campourſi*, who are really very fortunate Women. ‘ I know not whether it be to reward their Conſtancy ; but I believe, if their Love were paid for ‘ but to the full Value, their Lovers would have no ‘ Reason to make them ſuch Presents.’

A Man who is in Love, and often in fear of being nonsuited, easily perceives what all this means. He ſends in a Habit next Day, the very Pattern of *Campourſi*’s ; and this ſecond Habit occasions the like Present all round to every A&treſſ of the Opera ; ſo that it seems to be a general Tax, which they have all impos’d on their Lovers. Mean time, after all their Expence, they are not ſure of those Creatures Affection ; for their Hands are open to every Giver, and when a fair Opportunity offers, their Virtue is not very reſty ; tho’ they take a world of Care to conceal ſuch ſort of Intrigues from their Adorers, because they would not lose a conſtant Income for a tranſient Gain ; but when they are ſure of Secrecy, or at leaſt believe they are, they ſoon ſtrike a Bargain. Upon this Head I will tell thee a Story.

A Dancer, whose Name was *Prévet*, had a Gallant † of ſome diſtinguiſh’d Rank in Life, who heap’d great Favours upon her. It happen’d that a Country Gentleman arriving at *Paris*, ſaw her at the Opera, and was ſo enamour’d with her, that he went every day to ſee his Charmer dance, and every day the Wound grew deeper. He was quick-

The Bailiff of *M****.

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ly reduc'd to a pitiful Plight : His Friends could never see him ; for he shunn'd every Object that might take off his Thoughts from this Mistress of his Affections, and had nothing to comfort him but the Hopes of seeing the happy Minute arrive when the Opera began ; and after it was over, he abandon'd himself to Melancholy. One of his Friends desir'd him to let him know what made him so uneasy. As it gives some Ease to the Heart to complain, the Country Gentleman own'd that he was in love with *Prévost* ; ‘ but, adds he, I find it so impossible for me to be ever happy, that I have no Taste for all the other Enjoyments of Life. Be easy, said his Friend to him, your Case is not remediless. I am acquainted with one of the Girls that sing at the Opera. I will speak to her to-morrow in your favour ; perhaps you will be more happy than you imagine : But you must not think of ever declaring your Love for *Prévost* ; for she is kept by a certain Nobleman, but if you can content yourself with her giving you one Meeting, and will not grudge a hundred Lewid'ors, I take it your Business will be done.’ The Country Gentleman agreeing to those Articles, his Friend propos'd them to the Girl above mention'd, and the Girl to *Prévost*. The artful Confidant discharg'd her Part to Admiration ; for she was to have six Lewid'ors for herself, if she could make the Assumption ; and she succeeded. The Countryman gave the hundred Lewid'ors, ready Money, in a Purse. He had the Object of his Affections upon his own Terms, from Nine o'clock at Night, to Eight next Morning. ’Tis very like that he endeavoured to have an Equivalent for his Lewid'ors, and to make the most of his Time. He was contented with the Fruition, and return'd with Satisfaction to the Country. This Adventure was an

Encouragement to *Prévot* to try her Fortune in the like manner, another time; but her Intrigues were not attended with the same Success. Her Lover found her out, and turn'd her off. She did every thing in her power to reconcile him; and seeing that all her Arts were in vain, she had the Impudence to make a Demand upon him for certain Sums, and to sue him at Law. But the Gentleman had so much Interest as to quash so surprizing a Prosecution; and the Affair was afterwards made an end of, by People who took care to hush it up.

Thou art sensible, dear *Brito*, that the Courtezans at *Rome* don't make use of such Stratagems; for one of these Opera Women shall do more Harm by her Prodigality and Pillage, than all of them put together. Happy are they who carefully shun an Acquaintance with these pernicious Enchantresses, and whose pure Morals are not defil'd by their Company.

Farewell, my dear *Brito*, and if thou makest any longer Stay at *Rome*, let me hear from thee.





LETTER XXII.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS,
a Rabbi, at Constantinople.

Paris —

In my last I sent thee a particular Account of the different States of this Country, and endeavoured to give thee an exact Idea of the Ecclesiastics, the Magistrates, the Financiers, and the common People. I shall now say something of the Nobility and the Courtiers. I thought the Chevalier *de Maisin* could supply the Deficiencies that might be owing to the little Time of my Residence at *Paris*. As I had only a superficial Knowledge of the Court, I desir'd him to impart his Thoughts of it to me. He has given me an Account of it, which I thought very new. Thou knowest, that as to the Character of the Courtiers, it has been hitherto reckon'd in a manner impenetrable. He asserts, indeed, that 'tis as easy to read what is written in the Heart of the most refined Courtier, as in that of a plain Burgher. Tho' I am not entirely of his Opinion, I send thee his Draught of the Character, and leave thee to judge of it.

Reflections

*Reflections upon the CHARACTERS of
the COURTIERS.*

‘ ‘Tis the prevailing Opinion at *Paris*, that there’s no Possibility of knowing the Court, but by painful Study, and a thorough Acquaintance with its Customs. The Cit of St. *Denis* Street fancies that the Heart of a Man that lives at *Versailles*, who sees the King, and speaks to the Ministry, is as impenetrable as the most hidden Secrets of Nature. He hears it said perpetually, that Diffimulation is the Talent of Courtiers ; and as he is ignorant what an easy Matter it is, after an Acquaintance with Men, to discover by what Passions they are acted, he thinks ’tis impossible to see thro’ so thin a Disguise.

‘ Many People who know nothing of the Court but by Hear-say from others, or by the general Characters which they find of ’em in some Books, are equally guilty of this Mistake. But there’s no need of being much used to the Court, to be soon acquainted with its Maxims, and with the Character of those that compose it.

‘ ‘Tis with the Courtiers as it is with other Men. Nature has not form’d them of different Clay, nor has she pick’d their Souls from a different Magazine. Education has indeed alter’d and added to their Outside, but internally they are the same as ourselves.

‘ The same Vices and Virtues are as predominant in the City, as at the Court; and whatsoever Form the Passions assume, ’tis easy for Philosophers to discover what they are.

‘ In order to have a just Idea of the Court, one must look upon it in two different Lights. Then ’twill be easy to perceive, that what is taken for

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‘ an impenetrable Mystery, is only owing to a Prejudice which hinders a Man’s scrutinizing to the bottom of a Thing, which appears above the reach of common Understanding.

‘ Virtue, Merit, Science and Wit are the first Objects which I shall take into Consideration, and then I will run over the Vices which are the Opposites of those Virtues. From this Examination will result a Proof of that perfect Resemblance between all Men, in what Condition soever Heaven has plac’d them; and from thence the Conclusion will be obvious, that ’tis as easy to define the true Character of a Courtier, as that of any other Man.

‘ All the *French*, who are born a Degree above the common People, are inspir’d with the same Sentiments. Their Parents, their Preceptors, are incessantly inculcating to them, that Honour is the chief of all Enjoyments; that Wealth cannot stand in the stead, or supply the loss of Reputation, that Death is better than a Life without Honour; and that a Gentleman and a good Subject ought to love his King and his Country. A Country Gentleman does not explain these Maxims to his Son, so politely, and in such good Terms, as the Governour of a young Duke or Peer to his noble Pupil; but he repeats them to him oftener, and perhaps takes more care that his Son puts them in practice. An Estate of two hundred thousand Livres *per Ann.* to which the Duke is to be Heir, does not determine him to have a better Relish for those salutary Instructions, than the Nobleman who has only the common Necessaries of Life; and who looks upon Virtue as a part of his Appanage. Consequently the Temper of either is the only Thing that decides what Merit each is capable of acquiring.

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‘ As to Wit and Learning, the Courtier, be he ever so rich, has no Advantage over him that is but a private Man. A Citizen puts his Son to study under the best Rhetoricians in the Kingdom, without costing him a Penny. The public Schools are form’d for all Mankind. A Vivacity of Genius, a Disposition to Learning, are the only things that determine the Advancement of a young Man in the *Belles Lettres*. Ten Philosophers will never be able to make a Geometrician of a stupid Marquis; and many Preceptors have made able Men of the Sons of a Cobler*, and a Hatter †.

‘ The Fathers of Families in this Kingdom, have such easy and convenient Methods of Instructions for their Children, that I cannot see how Education can be brought as an Argument why a Courtier should have more Merit and Learning, than a Man who never saw either the King or his Ministers. If this Fact can be prov’d, it defeats the Notion which some have taken up, that there is more Wit, more Delicacy at Court, than in the City; and it will not be denied, that a Man who enriches his Understanding by the reading of good Books, and whom an able Master has form’d with his own Hands, is under no Necessity, for the sake of refining his Taste, to wait six Hours in a Morning, in the Antichamber of a Minister, or to go after Dinner to shew his Shapes at the *Tuileries*, and to play the Fool at Night behind the Scenes of a Theatre. In order to prove this Thesis, Recourse must be had to Experience.

‘ Among the superior Genius’s and great Men that Lewis XIVth’s Age produc’d, not only in the

* Rousseau. † La Motte.

Sci-

• Sciences, but in the Art of War, Posterity will
• scarce remember the Names of five or six who
• ow'd their Grandeur to nothing but their high
• Birth, but will read the Actions of the great *Conde*
• with Amazement, and enquire with Attention in-
• to those of the Viscount *de Turenne*; and they will
• propose the Duke *de Vendôme* as a Pattern for
• Generals: But what are these, to that Crowd of
• great Men, whose Names will be immortal; and
• who rais'd themselves purely by their Merit, as
• *Catinat, Vauban, Laubanis, Louvois, Colbert*; and
• in fine the Marshal *de Villars*, as useful to *France*,
• as the Conqueror of *Hannibal* was to his
• Country?

• If from Virtue and Valour we pass to Genius,
• we shall scarce find two Writers at Court. Are
• *Bussy* and *Rochefoucault* to be compar'd with
• *Corneille, Boileau, Racine, la Fontaine, Moliere, la*
• *Bruere, Fontenelle, Renard*, and many others, in
• short, whose Names alone would form a Volume,
• were only those to be included that have treated
• of Matters which purely concern the *Belles*
• *Lettres*?

• No body will say those Authors form'd their
• Genius's at Court, they being oblig'd for the same
• to themselves only, and their own Talents. When
• *Corneille* compos'd his *Cid*, the *Horaces*, *Cinna*,
• and his *Pompey*, and extricated the Theatre from
• the Chaos in which it was plung'd, he consulted
• the Latin Authors, studied the Wits of the *Au-*
• *gustan* Age, and in no respect affected the Ge-
• nius of the smart Fellows. *Racine* took the Hint
• of most of his Tragedies from *Sophocles* and *Eu-*
• *ripides*; and as he was so happy in touching the
• Heart, and moving the Passions, he knew full well
• that he was oblig'd for it to Nature. *Moliere* had
• more Obligation to the Court, which furnished
• him

him with a Number of Originals, but he found the same Advantage in the City. His best Pieces are Characters form'd upon private Persons. The *Tantuffe, l'Ecole des Femmes, les Precieuses ridicules, les Femmes Savantes*, are Subjects taken from the Manners of *Paris* and the whole Kingdom.

Wit is the Gift of Heaven; Birth and Quality can by no means procure it to those to whom God has deny'd it. Consequently, when a Citizen has had a handsome Education, when he has been educated by People whose Taste is solid and delicate, he may improve by the Lessons of his Master, as easily as the Son of a sovereign Prince. Thus are Genius and Merit equally the Portion of all the different Classes of People.

Let us now see whether the Great Lord has a greater Advantage in avoiding Vices. I have already shewn at the Beginning of these Reflections, that by the Principles which are infuss'd into the Children, the same Principles are explain'd and recommended to the Burghers as to the Nobility; so that the only thing to be consider'd, is in what State-Occasions are most dangerous.

A *Parisian*, who lives contented at home with his honest Patrimony, which he deriv'd from his Ancestors, and who is careful to keep it without increasing it by his Niggardliness, or consuming it by vain Expences, is he in the same Danger of going astray as a Nobleman whose annual Revenue of one hundred thousand Crowns, will not serve him half the Year? He spends fifty thousand Crowns more than his Income, and with an immense Estate is poorer than he who has but one thousand Crowns to live upon. An honest Mediocrity is not attended either with the Meannesses of Poverty, or the foolish Prodigality of Riches.

‘ A Man who can be contented and settled in his Mind, despises the Privilege of borrowing and not paying under the Sanction of a great Name, or a venerable Employment. He is not incumber’d with a Pack of Taylors and Sadlers, nor with twenty or thirty Domestics, whom he maintains out of another Person’s Substance, and yet owes them their Wages. He would be ashamed to flatter a Farmer-General, for the sake of obtaining an Ounce of the People’s Blood, with which that Leech had fatten’d himself.

‘ If it be true then, that the great Lord, notwithstanding his Nobility, has neither more Wit nor more Virtue than the Citizen ; that he is more expos’d than the latter to the Passions, why should he be more difficult to be fathom’d ? Is it by reason of that profound Dissimulation which is pretended to be the peculiar Talent of the Court ? But is there not the same Dissimulation in the City ? And if there be the same Spirit, why should they be at a loss to check themselves ? At the same time this will be the more practicable, because they will be less disturb’d by the Passions.

‘ Notwithstanding the feign’d Carelesses, the repeated Embraces, and the far-fetched Compliments made by the Courtiers to one another, there is not one of them but knows how to behave to those that think to cajole him. The Dissimulation of the Court proceeds rather from Habit than from good Sense ; and such a Man passes for a great Politician, who in all his Life-time knew not why he deserv’d that Character.

‘ In all States, Men being much the same, ’tis very easy for Philosophers to see through the Veil which seems to cover the Doublings of a great Lord’s Heart ; and ’tis my real Opinion, that the

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• Definitions I have given of their different Characters will be found to be just.

• I distinguish the Courtiers into three Classes. • The first are to be admir'd. The second have but a moderate Genius; and the third sort have nothing in common with the others, but Clothes, Equipages and Domestics.

• The Nobility who are endu'd with distinguish'd Merit, are fewest in Number; yet there are several worthy of the Esteem of the whole World, such as are not intoxicated with their vain Grandeur. They are not of Opinion, that Birth gives Wit and Merit. They cultivate the *Belles Lettres*, and eagerly court the Approbation and Acquaintance of Men of distinguish'd Learning.

• There is one * that applies himself to the reading of Philosophy. As he keeps his Learning to himself, and takes a world of Care to conceal it, he proves just as good a Metaphysician in his Closet, as is a tender Lover with his Mistress.

• There's another † of lively Parts and good Judgment, who, tho' but young, fills one of the Places set apart for the forty chief Genius's of the Kingdom.

• A third ‡ is the Protector of the fine Arts; and as the Sciences are connected therewith, he is Master of them all.

• Another ** has a delicate Taste, and is a Man of Spirit and Judgment.

• Among the illustrious Courtiers, the Nephew of a great Minister †† holds a distinguish'd Rank, and besides a sparkling Wit, has a graceful Person.

* The Count de Forcalquier. † The Duke de Villars.

‡ The Duke de Montemar. ** The Duke de Vaujou.

†† The Duke de Richelieu.

‘ The second Class of Courtiers is more numerous than the first. It consists of those who being countenanced by the Mode of the Times, and the reading of certain Romances, endeavour, by speaking but little, by smiling à propos, and by happily placing a Jest which they have heard by chance, to acquire the Reputation of Wits; and they pass themselves for such upon the Ignorant, who make up the third Class.

‘ All the Merit of this lowest Class consists in knowing the Parts of *Champaign* where there is the most racy Wine. They know the Adventures and Intrigues of certain Women, and what Opera is to be play'd next Month. Some, indeed, extend their Knowledge so far, as to read the *Mercure-Gallant*. Their Lives are as uniform as the Course of the Sun. In the Morning they repair to the Anti-chamber of the Ministers, and the rest of the Day they spend at the Table, at Gaming, or at the Theatres. They go to Court at the King's Supper-time; after which they sit down to Table, and don't break up till Day-light. The most notable Deeds of the Day consist only of a few Bows made with a good Grace, and some gracious Glances of the Eye: And if to such great Qualities they add a Verse or two of a Ballad, sung softly, they then complain of People who are not endow'd with such rare Talents. The Court alone is capable of forming Taste, and none but the Courtiers have it; so that every Man who cannot grace his Name with a Title, is forbid under heavy Penalties to have any Wit, and to think justly.

‘ Be the Difference what it will between the three sorts of Characters which I have been describing, all the three do however resemble one another in their Emulation and Aim to please the

‘ Sovereign. The Courtier in general may be compare’d to a Cameleon, or he may be term’d the Ape of his Master ; being melancholy, gay, devout, debauch’d, and always ready to be and do every thing ; and such a servile Imitator of the Virtues and Faults of his Prince, that one would swear that one and the same Spirit animated a thousand Bodies.

‘ There is besides these a Number of Persons at Court, who must not be confounded with the Croud of Courtiers ; they are such who, by their Offices and Employments, are obliged to be near the Sovereign. This is a State which must be distinguished from the Courtier, who has nothing to do. Merit is commonly the Portion of the latter, and the Affairs which are committed to their Charge, demand that they be Persons both of Capacity and Experience.’

I believe, dear *Isaac*, these Reflections may please thee. I shall sometimes desire the Favour of the Chevalier *de Maisin* to impart his Hints to me, and especially in Matters which I cannot have nor give so just a Notion of as he.

Farewell, my dear *Isaac*, and may God heap his Benefits upon thee.





LETTER XXIII.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS,
a Rabbi at Constantinople.

Paris —

IN my last Letter I made thee a Promise to speak to thee of the Ministers, Secretaries of State, and the other Persons, who are oblig'd, by virtue of their Offices to attend the Court, but are not attach'd to it meerly as Courtiers.

The Kings of *France* seldom raise any to the Ministry, but Persons of an extraordinary Genius, and such as are entirely devoted to them ; nor do they give them that despotic Power which the Sultans grant to the Viziers. The *French* Monarchs take Ministers to aid them in the Dispatch of Affairs, and not to share the Power with them. 'Tis not only out of the Power of the Minister to put any Person to Death by his single Authority, but he is obliged to give an Account to the King of the Orders which he issues for arresting any private Persons of Distinction ; whereas a Vizier at *Constantinople* may with Impunity put any Man to Death, against whom he has taken a Pique : But at *Paris* the King himself durst not make use of so tyrannical a Prerogative ; for when any of his Subjects has committed a capital Offence, he causes him to be try'd and condemn'd by Judges.

Ever

Ever since the Reign of *Henry IV.* to the present, the Persons who have been employ'd in the Ministry, have been almost to a Man endow'd with superior Genius. The greatest and most illustrious have been taken from the Order of the Ecclesiastics *. In the Reign of *Lewis XIII.* the Cardinal *de Richlieu*, a Man of prodigious Parts, a superior Genius, great in Prosperity, intrepid in Adversity; and notwithstanding his Function, as good a General as he was an able Minister in the Cabinet; an intimate Friend, an implacable Enemy, and a zealous Admirer of the Arts and Sciences; began to lay the Foundations of that Grandeur to which *Lewis XIV.* attain'd.

Cardinal *Mazarine* had the Education of that Monarch, to whom, when but a Child, he did Services which that Prince always retain'd in his Memory. This Minister had not all the Virtues of his Predecessor the Cardinal *de Richlieu*; nor, on the other hand, had he his Imperfections. He liv'd in a Time full of Troubles and Factions, and had nothing to support him but the Authority of a King who was yet but a Minor, tho' he had the Princes of the Blood to struggle with, and almost all the Grandees of the Kingdom: He did that by his refin'd Policy, which the Cardinal *de Richlieu* did by his Resolution; and after several Crosses and Misfortunes, he died as much regretted by his Master as he had been fear'd by his Enemies, and esteem'd by those who bore him the greatest Hatred.

Colbert and *Louvois* were rais'd to that Rank which they possess'd by nothing but their Merit.

* The Reader, no doubt, perceives, that in the Number of those able Ministers, the Author had no Thought of including M. *Chamillard* and the Cardinal *du Bois*.

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They were Enemies to one another as long as they liv'd, which Enmity of theirs contributed to their Master's Happiness; for each of them strove to gain his Esteem, and outv'y'd one another in the Affairs of their Ministry and Employment; and each being a Watch upon the other, the one was as a Spur to the other. The one * was a Master of Military Affairs, and skilful in Foreign Negotiations. The † other being thoroughly vers'd in the Management of the Domestic Affairs of the Kingdom, was the Protector of the Arts and Sciences; and both being inimitable in their Qualities, their Talents united together produc'd a perfect Ministry.

The Name of the present Minister is the Cardinal *de Fleury*. I have no Obligation to flatter him; but there are few that deserve more sincere Commendation. He form'd the Manners of his Sovereign from his very Childhood, and made the greatest King in the World the Man of the greatest Honesty; which is a Character seldom found in Princes, who often think Virtue, Piety and Candor ridiculous Qualities. All *Europe* has done him the Justice which he deserves, and the Enemies of *France* are oblig'd to confess, that since Cardinal *Richelieu*, never was the Ministry of *France* conducted with so much Secrecy, Prudence and Happiness.

There are other Ministers of an inferior Rank to the former, and they are call'd Secretaries of State, whose Places are generally occupied by Persons of a superior Genius. They look among the ablest Statesmen for such as are the most proper to possess such important Offices. The Necessity there is that he who holds a Place of such Importance should be capable of bearing the Weight of Affairs, hinders

* *M. du Louvois.* † *M. de Colbert.*

the Sovereigns from determining themselves purely from Fancy or Friendship.

The Courtiers in general are as cringing and fearful before the Ministers, as they are haughty and confident towards their Inferiors ; but with all their Pride they know nothing of Life, except what is spent in an Antichamber or a Gallery. 'Tis true, that as for such who are so unhappy as to stand in need of them, they take a sweet Revenge upon them for the Mortification they feel, in being oblig'd to creep ; and whatever Chagrin they suffer of this kind at *Versailles*, they make themselves amends by the haughty, ridiculous and intolerable Airs which they give themselves in the City.

Let a Grandee assume as much Vanity as he will, he appears but a little Man at Court ; for the Majesty of the Sovereign eclipses all other Grandeur. When a private Man is seiz'd with any violent Starts of Ambition, I advise him in order to get rid of that Passion only to go to the King's Supper, to see the low and humble State of those Persons whose Ranks and Honours he envies, when he will find them in a Situation so different from that in which he commonly sees them, that if he reflects ever so little, he will not envy the trifling Happiness of assuming the Air of a Sovereign one half of the Day, to be a Slave the other.

The Presence of a Prince or of a Prime Minister changes the Features and Physiognomy of a great many Courtiers, so that 'tis hard to know them. The more haughty and proud they are by Nature, the meaner is their Countenance. The Constraint which they suffer, together with the Eclipse of their Grandeur, do but the more confound them. If you meet with a Courtier out of the Eye of his Sovereign, he scarce salutes you ; or, if he does, 'tis but very coolly.

He

He calls you, talks to you, and asks you a Question, without vouchsafing to look at you. He would have you know by the lofty and imperious Tone in which he speaks to you, that he is infinitely above you. He gets a Croud about him ; and in the midst of the Circle, he decides, condemns and approves, takes Snuff, looks upon his Watch, and talks of his Equipage. The Prince comes in by Chance, at whose Presence all this ridiculous Grandeur vanishes ; the *Proteus* changes his Form, lowers his Voice, and grows very humble : But as soon as the Sovereign has turn'd his Back, he returns to his antient Form, stands a Tip-toe, raises his Shoulders ; and is as peremptory as ever : His Behaviour being as confident to Men of no Genius, as it is sheepish to Men of Wit, he discourses of War to a Clergyman, of the Mathematics and Fortifications to a Lawyer, and of Philosophy to an Officer.

This Character, so much distinguished by Vanity and Presumption, is one of the principal Reasons of the Reservedness and Caution of the Ministers against abandoning themselves to the Croud of Courtiers. They would soon lose their Authority if they did not take so much Care as they do to shew the Extent of it. An honest Familiarity and cordial Behaviour, cannot be practis'd in the Acquaintance and Company of a Man, who not being able to keep a proper Medium, either cringes like a Slave, or struts like a Monarch.

The *Mahometans* have as much Respect and Regard for their Ministers as the *French* have ; but in order to please them they don't make use of those base Flatteries, which are so common in this Country. What Power soever a Vizier has, and what Precedency soever his Post gives him above the common Offices, they make no servile court to him ; they pay him the Honours that are due to him ; and

in their Submission they preserve an Air of Grandeur mix'd with Modesty. The *Turks* in all their Actions observe a certain Decency, which prepossesses People in their favour.

A Courtier would be thought at *Constantinople* to be a Man of a surprising and unfathomable Character; for there's an infinite Difference betwixt the Court of *France* and of the *Porte*. The Persons who are Attendants upon the Sultan by virtue of their Offices and Employments, only see him in order to regulate the Affairs of their Posts. That Swarm of Eunuchs, Capigis, Bostangis and other Persons set apart for the Service of the Seraglio, is nothing but a Medley of Domestics and Guards: Therefore it may be said, there is not a Courtier that constantly attends the Grand Signior. He sometimes chuses one or two Favourites among his Viziers or Bashas, who are the only Persons that see him, exclusive of such as have any Matters to settle concerning their Jurisdiction. The whole Court consists of black Eunuchs, some Mutes and Dwarfs. As for Ladies, there are perhaps as many as in *France*; but they are rather the Slaves of two or three Favourites, than their Companions and Equals.

The Sultans Manner of Life has something in it gloomy and solitary. They are shut up in their Palace, and are seldom seen by the People, but on particular Days. Being Slaves to their own Grandeur, they resemble the *Nazarene* Idols that I mention'd to thee, who never go out of their Case without the Permission of their Guardian.

The *French* Monarchs live in a very different Manner: They eat in public, and shew themselves as familiarly as a meer private Man: They speak to those of their Subjects that they love. As they know that they are infinitely above every thing breathing, they

they disdain the ridiculous Vanity of affecting a Ceremonial which wou'd cramp them, and not increase their Authority, which is much more extensive than that of the Sultan. tho' not so visible. Nor is it liable to those Encroachments on it, to which the Grand Signior's despotic Power is expos'd.

In this Country, the Majesty of the Throne was never known to be fully'd by Affronts put upon the Persons of their Sovereigns. Whatever Rebellions happen'd in the Kingdom, Respect was always paid to the Person of the Prince * ; and even such as bore Arms against him, affected to give out, that they had no Design either against his Person or Authority : They cover'd their Designs with the Pretext of defending Religion, or guarding themselves against the Oppressions of the Ministers. At *Constantinople* the Janizaries in their first Insurrection dishonour'd the Ottoman Blood itself, for which they have so profound a Veneration. The Infamies which that insolent Militia caus'd the unhappy *Osman* to suffer, made one Part of the Empire rise in Arms, and the Blood of above ten thousand Janizaries was hardly sufficient to appease the Indignation of the Friends of that unfortunate Prince.

I have often reflected on what might be the Occasion of such frequent Commotions and Rebellions. I thought they were owing to the Sultan's despotic Power. The Grand Signior assembles no Council to lay a Tax ; nor does he take the Trouble of seeing it register'd in the Assembly of the Cadis. He

* This has need of some Explanation ; for the Jacobin Fryar who assassinated *Henry III.* the Jesuit *Guignard*, *John Chastel* and *Ravaillac* who conspir'd against the Life of *Henry IV.* had scarce any Respect for the Persons of their Sovereigns ; it must therefore be supposed, that *Aaron Monceca* only means the Heads of the several Parties.

commands without Consultation, and the Grand Vizier is the Executioner of his Orders. Consequently, to him the People impute whatever Misfortunes they suffer; at most their Hatred reaches no further than to the Vizier, who is as that Prince's Minister and Favourite.

In Monarchical Countries the Enmity of the common People seldom falls upon the Monarch, but strikes at fifty different Objects before it reaches to him. . The Financiers, the Brokers, the Farmers-General, the Counsellors of State, and the Ministers, are those on whom the greatest public Misfortunes are charg'd. When the Odium falls on all these different Subjects, it languishes, and does not fwell to those Criminal Outrages which have cost so many dethron'd Sultans their Life and Liberty.

I desir'd thee to acquaint me whether *Osman Basha* was dead; but I have not had a Line from thee, and should be glad thou would'st let me hear from thee upon that Head. This Basha is look'd upon here as a very extraordinary Man. He is esteem'd by some private Men; but in general, he is blam'd for his Manners, his Conduct, and his changing his Religion. The fine Gentlemen agree that he has an infinite Share of Wit; but the Fryars won't allow him to have the least Capacity. Tho' their Character for Partiality leads them into this Opinion of him, I forgive them for the sake of the Crime which they condemn. A Man of Honour ought to live and die in the Religion in which he was born; and has no Excuse for changing it, but when he is in an Error. Whatever Misfortunes and Crosses we suffer, nothing ought to shake us. Thou knowest I have told thee a hundred times that the Quarrels, Vexations and Mortifications which *Osman* met with, did not appear to me to be a lawful Cause for authorising his Change of Religion.

I am

I am not ignorant that they who were for excusing him said, that he was neither a *Nazarene* nor a *Mahometan*. By granting him this Point it will still result, that he was obliged to do that for his Honour, which he did not do on the score of Religion.

Fare thee well, dear *Isaac*, and may'st thou live to have a numerous Posterity.



LETTER XXIV.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS,
a Rabbi, at Constantinople.

Paris—

I Have read over the Paper which thou sent'st me from *Osman Basha's* Secretary with Care, and am as sensible as thou art of that Hatred which the *Nazarenes* and *Mahometans* bear to us. There is nothing so easy as to answer the Objections made to us, concerning the Interruption of our Ceremonies, and the Cessation of Circumcision in *Spain*.

The chief of our Precepts is founded on the Law of Nature, which permits us to take care of our Lives by such Precautions and Forecast as do not directly attack the Divinity. Our Doctors could answer to dispense us from a Custom in a Case of pressing Necessity. 'Tis not the Externals that constitute Religion. 'Tis Faith, Belief, and the Sentiments of the inward Man. Ceremonies ought to be observ'd when it may be done without risking one's Life, and the Lives of a thousand Innocents; but when there's such evident Danger impending, the

Use thereof may be suspended. It is not the same thing as to the Substance of Religion, from which nothing can nor ought to excuse us. The most severe Punishments ought not to shock us. When a *Jew*, for Instance, is cited to appear before the tyrannical Tribunal of the Inquisition, let the Danger of his professing his Religion be what it will, he ought, without scruple, to value himself upon it. The Majesty of the Almighty would be offended by a Lye, and by base Cowardice. Can a Son disown his Father; and such a Father too as he is obliged to for so many Favours? But God does not expect that we should run in the Face of Torments; and he condemns that blind Zeal which deprives us of the Life that he has committed to our keeping. We see several Examples in our Books which prove the Truth of my Opinion. Our Fathers in the Captivity which they suffered, could not be shock'd in their Belief; yet they were obliged to give up and suspend many of the Precepts of their antient Discipline; nay, they ow'd their Preservation to the Violation of those Precepts, and the *Jewish* People were obliged for their Safety to *Ester*, when she was become the Wife of *Ahasuerus*. Tho' 'tis one of our principal and most inviolable Customs, not to suffer Matches between the Blood of *Israel* and the impure Blood of the Infidels, whatever Reluctance *Ester* had to go to Bed with an idolatrous King, there was an absolute Necessity for Compliance; since her Refusal of that Honour, would have plunged the *Israelites* head-long into fresh Calamities. The Fear of those same Misfortunes is a very good Excuse at this Day for the *Spanish Jews* not observing Circumcision: And I don't see why they are not as justifiable in using the same Precautions as our Forefathers, since they have much more to fear than they had.

There

There are a thousand Instances of such Forecast among the *Nazarenes*, founded upon the Cessation of some of their Ceremonies. During the Persecutions which they suffer'd under the *Roman Emperors*, several for fear of Death and Torture fled into the Heart of the Desarts, and there pass'd the rest of their Lives like Hermits, without any Dealings with their Fellow-Creatures. Some liv'd fifty and sixty Years thus, without seeing one Soul †. This Solitude to which they retir'd, was a Cessation of all the principal Ceremonies to which they pretend themselves inviolably oblig'd. How could they, on their Sabbath-day, assist at their Divine Service? How could they partake of the Sacraments of the Church? For many of them were not Priests and were not qualified to perform the sacerdotal Functions. Therefore, in their Retirement they suspended the Exercise of all the Ceremonies. Neverthe-

† St. Jerome affirms, that St. Paul the Hermit liv'd for sixty Years in a Wildernes, where he was miraculously fed by a Raven, which brought him every Day half of a Loaf, *Eja, inquit Paulus,—sexaginta jam anni sunt, quod accipio dimidii semper Panis Fragmentum.* Hieronymi Epist. de Vitâ Pauli Heremitæ, lib. 3. 'Tis certain therefore, that there have been holy Men, who have dispense'd with themselves all their Life-time, from partaking of the Sacraments and Feasts of the Church. The *Dominican Fryars*, who wrote the Life of *Mary Magdalen*, have made amends for this Absurdity: They say, that the Angels came every Day to bring the Communion to the holy Woman in her Grotto. St. Jerome, without having recourse to the same Expedient, might have made St. Paul a Communicant in like manner. It would not have cost him much to have suppos'd that the half of the Loaf which the Raven brought had been consecrated before by a Priest. A Lye, either grosser or smaller, was no very great Matter.

less, we find, that in Process of Time they were acknowledg'd to be Saints.

As to the Reproach cast upon us, that we have a number of Childish Customs, which are not enjoined by the fundamental Precepts of our Law, I frankly own, that by length of Time a great many needless Things have been introduc'd: But are the *Nazarenes* justifiable in censuring us; they, whose Religion is over-charg'd with so many impertinent Ceremonies? I gave the a Detail of some of them in my former Letters. Nor are the *Turks* any better qualified to reproach us on the same score: For in their Religion there's a Chain of Impertinencies or Ceremonies which pass for fundamental Precepts. Is any thing so ridiculous as the Dancing and Round-abouts of the Dervishes; as the Custom of burying the Dead in such a manner that the good Angels may the more easily come at them; and as the Obligation of going in Pilgrimage to *Mecca* and *Medina*? As if God punish'd a Man in the other World, for not having travell'd six or seven hundred Leagues to see another Man's Tomb; and as if such a Visit at all concern'd Heaven!

If we have impertinent Customs and Rites, 'tis a Fault we have in common with the other Religions. Happy are those Doctors who can purge their Religion from them! As to this Heap of Superstitions, I must give thee my real Thoughts. Our Rabbies have introduc'd a great many Notions, which, in the Opinion of the Learned, do considerable Injury to our Law. Tho' thou art thyself a Rabbi, yet that Friendship and Familiarity which are between us, give a Sanction to my Freedom with thee. Besides, thou rejectest most of those ridiculous Opinions; and if thou seemest to approve of any, 'tis rather out of a political Regard to thy Brethren, than from any real Conviction.

- What

What can a Philosopher say or think when he reads in our Authors †, that God in the Beginning of the World, created on the 5th Day, two great Whales, one of which he keeps alive to this Day, to sport and play with; and the other he preserves from Corruption in Salt-water, to serve as a Dish at the Banquet with which he is to regale the Righteous at the last Day? Is it not conveying a very beautiful and noble Idea of the Almighty Power, to make him play with a Fish, as a Child of six Years old does with a Doll? That sovereign Being which has existed for an immense Space of Time; that infinite Being which comprehends every thing, but cannot be comprehended itself, who is self-sufficient and created all Beings out of Nothing, does he amuse himself in seeing one Fish play, and with the Care of preserving another in salt Pickle to treat good People? I am sorry that the Rabbies should serve up such coarse Provision at the Table of the Almighty. Probably the great Number of People who they foresaw would be at the Entertainment, determin'd them to make choice of the biggest Fish they knew.

The Opinion conceiv'd by several of our Doctors, concerning the Etymology of *Eve's** Name, is to my Mind still more ridiculous. They say it comes from a Word which signifies to *talk*. Then they add gravely and dogmatically, that there fell from Heaven twelve great Baskets full of Chit-chat; and that the Women pick'd up nine of them. When a Man of good solid Sense comes to read such Fables, he is prejudiced against a Religion, the Depositaries of which are the Inventors of such Tales, and the Forgers of such Chimæras.

† *Pirke Eliez.* cap. 9. p. 11.

* Buxtorf's *Hebrew Lexicon*, cap. 9. p. 228. at the Word נִנְ:

The Instance of the *Nazarenes* ought to be a Lesson to us. The first Cause of the Separation of a Part of their Brethren, was a heap of extravagant Notions, with which the Monks stuff'd their Books. For one while the Laity were made to believe a thousand ridiculous Stories ; and there was not a Lay-Brother but exhibited some Books of his Writing to the Public, full of whimsical Notions. The more Things that they contain'd contrary to common Sense, the silly People believ'd them to be the greater Mysteries.

The Men of Sense for a while only laugh'd in their Sleeves at these ridiculous Writings. In Pro-cess of Time, Imposture and Fraud being carried to too great a Length, several thought themselves oblig'd in Honour, and for the sake of Religion, to oppose the Torrent. Therefore, many learned Men employ'd their Pens to undeceive those whom they had seduc'd ; and in some Measure they succeeded ; but the Monks perceiving that their Credit must stand or fall with their Lyes, made a Struggle to prevent their being detected ; and as they had a considerable Interest with the sovereign Pontiff, they got their Opponents excluded from their Communion ; but notwithstanding this Victory their Imposture was soon discover'd. The Eyes of the Public were open'd ; and among those who continued in their Faith, there were several who thoroughly undeceived the common People ; so that none but a few silly Women and Ignoramus's remain'd in an Error.

One of the principal Enemies of those ridiculous Books was surnam'd *, *The Dislodger of the Saints* ; for he turn'd more out of Paradise than twenty Pontiffs could ever put into it. The Monks were raving mad to see the Authority which he exercis'd over

M. *Baillet.*

those

those pretended Saints; and they were the more surpriz'd at it, because he was of the same Faith with the sovereign Pontiff, who had taken most of those Saints into his Protection; which stood them in no stead; for they were fain to quit the Possession of their heavenly Mansion; and what was worse than all for 'em, was, that the Reasons of their Adversary carried such Evidence with 'em, that they even convinc'd the most obstinate *Nazarenes*, and procur'd him the Esteem of the sovereign Pontiff. Perhaps thou hast a Desire to know the principal Actions of the Lives of some of those illustrious Exiles.

One * liv'd forty Years erect upon a Pillar, like a Statue, and had no way to ease himself, but the same Privilege which Geese have, that stand sometimes on one Foot, and sometimes on another. Before he was displac'd, he was invocated for Pains in the Hams.

The other † amus'd himself with the Devil, whom he cou'd manage as he pleas'd; and one Day, as the said infernal Spirit went to take some Liberty with him, he seiz'd him by the Nose with a pair of Tongs, and chastis'd him to such a degree, that the infernal Spirit would have no more to do with him.

I should never finish my Letter, were I to send thee the Names of all that have been unsainted. The two first will give thee an Idea of the rest.

'Twere to be wish'd that some Doctor would arise among our Rabbies, like the *Nazarene* above-mention'd, who turn'd so many out of Paradise. We should be oblig'd to him for reducing our Religion to its primitive Simplicity; and for disarming

* *Simeon Stilites*, an Anchorite, who is said to have liv'd in the fifth Century.

† *Dunstan*.

our Enemies of the Weapons which they make use of to combat it. Notwithstanding any Trouble and Opposition which he might meet with at first, Truth would prevail in the End, and sooner or later the Obligation to him would be confess'd.

Fare thee well, my dear *Isaac*, and let no body know the Sentiments which I have deposited in thy Breast. For they would certainly subject me to the Hatred of the Idiots. May the God of *Israel* grant thee Health and Wealth.



LETTER XXV.

JACOB BRITO to AARON MONCECA,

Rome—

I Must be going in a Day or two for *Genoa*; so this is the last Letter I shall write to thee from *Rome*. The modern Structures which I have seen in this City, are not inferior either in Taste or Grandeur to those of the Antients. The most entire Fragment that remains of the old *Roman* Buildings, is the *Pantheon*, heretofore the Temple of all the Gods, and now of all the Saints. A part of the famous Amphitheatre was destroy'd by the Fraud of the Nephew of one of the sovereign Pontiffs, who having desir'd of his Uncle only twenty-four Hours time to carry some Stones that he wanted out of the *Circus*, employ'd near three thousand Workmen or Peasants, who in five or six hours time demolish'd a part of the Edifice; and if they had not been

been hinder'd from going on, they would not have left one Stone upon another.

This is not the only time that the City of *Rome* has suffer'd considerable Damage from Nepotism; for as I have already told you, she is continually a Prey to the Avarice of the covetous Nephews. The late Pontiff had like to have depriv'd *Italy* and the whole World of the finest Pieces of Painting that ever were. *Raphael*, that famous Painter, who won the Prize in his Art, painted three Chambers in the *Vatican**. There's no other kind of Tapistry in its Apartments, but the Works which he has drawn upon the Walls. As among some Subjects taken from the *Nazarenes* Histories, there several borrow'd from Antiquity, the Pontiff was for obliterating those Master-peices, to make room for painting the History of a Pair of Monks, to whom he had just before granted a Writ of Canonization †. The Demolisher of those perfect Pieces was to be a Painter of *Benevento*; but by good luck some Cardinals having heard of the Pope's Intention, strenuously oppos'd his Design, so that he desisted from his Purpose of doing so much Harm to the City of *Rome*, as the Barbarians who formerly sack'd it.

The *Trajan* and *Antonine* Pillars are the most beautiful things that have been exempted from the Misfortunes that have happen'd to this Capital of the World. On the top of those Pillars are plac'd the Statues of two of the chief *Nazarene* Doctors, to whom the Pontiffs pretend to be Successors in a direct Line; and from whom they also pretend to derive their Infallibility: But 'tis remarkable that one of those Doctors rebuk'd the other, and that nei-

* They are three Halls, near the Rooms painted by *Raphael*.

† I have heard several Persons at *Rome* say, that this Pontiff call'd *Raphael's Pictures Porcheria*, or Hogsties. ther

ther of them thought himself infallible, having both expressly taught in their Writings, that this was the Prerogative of God alone, and not of Man, who is nothing in comparison to him, let his State be as high as it will.

The Safety and Justness of the Pontifical Decisions, are in this Country the most essential Articles of the *Nazarenes* Creed. The Inquisition is vigilant to confirm the Maxims of this Doctrine; and when it has once laid hold of any Person who dares to assert the contrary, 'tis a Rarity if he comes off with less than Death; for it would be far less dangerous to offend God at *Rome*, than the Pontiff. A Man guilty of mortal Sin is discharg'd from it by giving a Testoon or two to burn Wax to the Honour of St. *Francis*: If any one should refuse to believe that two of the Pontiff's Fingers extended, cleanse a Million of Souls at a time, he would, perhaps, be burnt for it in some public Square, and all from the Motives of Conscience and Religion.

The sovereign Pontiffs of the *Nazarenes* were chose heretofore by the Suffrages of the People, which, however, were of no Effect further than they were confirm'd by the Will of the Emperors*.

In

* The Title of *Holiness*, which is now given to the Pope alone, was formerly common to all the Bishops. The Court of *Rome* is very much in the wrong to go about to advance this Title as a Mark of its Independancy on Princes: For it is manifest, and averr'd by all Histories, that for above three hundred Years after *Constantine*, the Emperors of *Constantinople* always had the Prerogative of confirming the Election of the Popes. As to the Name of *Holiness*, it was antiently given to all the Bishops, ' This Word says *Pasquier*, was particularly ascribed to the Bishops. *Sidonius* in the 4th Book,

In process of time this Maxim alter'd; for actually the Pontiffs that wear a red Habit †, and such as are of a distinguished Rank in the *Nazarene Church*, now enjoy this Prerogative. Sometimes

• Book of his Epistles, speaks of the Election of a Bishop, in which there had been great Contentions. *St. Patianus and St. Euphronius have at length*, says he, • chose *St. John, a Person valuable for every thing that is honest, humane and good-natur'd*. *St. Jerome writing to Florentius*, says *St. Evagrius the Priest, presents his Respects to you*. And from hence it comes, that when they spoke to the Bishops, 'twas with this honourable Title, *Your Holiness*; consequently you will meet with it express'd in all the Epistles of *Cassiodorus*, as often as *Theodoric, Alaric, Theodatus, or Vitigius Kings of Italy*, wrote to any Bishops of their Kingdom. *St. Gregory writing to the Patriarchs of Antioch uses one while these Words, Vesta Beatitude*; another while *Vesta Sanctitas*; to the Bishop of *Milan*, who held a great Post in *Italy, Vesta Sanctitas*; to the other common Bishops *Vesta Fraternitas*. *Socrates in the 6th Book of his Ecclesiastical History excuses himself, because when speaking of the Bishops he had not honour'd them with the Epithet of Sanctissima, or such other sort of Title as had been the Custom to bestow upon them*. On the contrary, *Theodoret, through the whole Discourse in his History, scarce speaks of Bishops but he gives them the Title of Sancti or Beati, even while they were living. Pasiquier Recherches de la France, lib. ii. cap. iii. p. 157.* So much for the Origin of the pompous Title of *Holiness* which the Court of *Rome* makes such a Parade with at this Day. But tho' it does not think these Proofs valid, I believe it would be glad to be furnish'd with Proofs that were but half as valid to authorize the pretended imaginary Donation by *Constantine*.

† The Cardinals.

they have a hard Matter to agree in the Choice of a Subject; such are the various Interests in which they are bound to certain Princes, whose Creatures they are. There was a Division among them for near a Century, and each Party chose a sovereign Pontiff; so that there happen'd to be two, and even three at a time, who retired to the Dominions of the Princes that prote&teted them. The first thing that these took care to do every Morning as soon as they awak'd, was to excommunicate one another *. At length it was determin'd in a general Council, which was the true sovereign Pontiff; and it was therein decided, that his Authority was inferior to that of the general Councils. This Question was afterwards condemn'd by the Popes, and has been only admitted on the other side of the *Alps*, and not in *Italy*, nor in *Spain*.

These Electors of the Pontiff are call'd Cardinals, and are for the most part Noblemen, or the Sons of Princes. Several of them live at the Courts of the Sovereigns who are their Patrons; so that there remains but a certain number at *Rome*, where they

* I should be glad to know what the Holy Spirit, which never ceases to enlighten the Popes, was doing at that Juncture. Was it contrary to itself, and did it destroy by the Actions of one Pope what it established by those of another? Father *Paul*, where he speaks of a Portmanteau's falling into the Water, which contain'd the Instruments that came from *Rome* for the Legates who presid'd at the Council, says, *that the Spirit of God moved upon the Face of the Waters*. Might it not be also said, that during the Western Schism it seem'd to confound all things, and to bring back the antient Chaos, when *Frigida pugnabant calidis, humentia fccis*; for one Pope granted Indulgences to the same Persons that another Pope excommunicated.

are.

are good Neighbours to the Inhabitants ; and without them the common People would be excessively poor ; for the Money which they lay out, is all that goes into private Hands, that which comes from foreign Countries being pocketed by the Priests and Friars. Of this the Nephews and Ministers of the reigning Pontiffs have a large Share ; but they generally keep their Money lock'd up in their Coffers, or else send it abroad. What has lately happen'd to Cardinal *Coscia*, will be a Lesson to future Favourites, who will thereby learn to take more Care of concealing their Money, and to be more circumspect for fear of being call'd to an Account.

This *Coscia* in the preceding Pontificate put Honours, Dignities, Favours, and, in short, every thing to Sale : And you will imagine that he was not very difficult in the Article of Licences and Indulgences. He had made Sale of these not only to all Parts of *Europe*, but wou'd fain have established Factories in other Parts of the World to put off his Merchandise. The Pontiff, whose Minister he was, dying, his Enemies, who long'd to be fingering the Treasure which he had heap'd together, rais'd a cruel Persecution against him ; and after an Imprisonment of several Years, he has been obliged to refund some of his Wealth.

If the Custom of obliging a favourite Minister to give up his Accounts, pass'd from one Pontificate to another, *Coscia's* Money would perhaps circulate from one Nephew to another for four or five hundred Years.

The Cardinals and great Lords have magnificent Country-Seats near *Rome*, which they call Vineyards, and are adorn'd with antient and modern Statues, and with Paintings by the best Masters.

The

The *Borghese* Vineyard is one of the finest *. It contains a great many curious Fragments. The Vineyard that belongs to the Princes *Pamphili* is also magnificent; but most of the Statues are maim'd and spoil'd by a very singular Incident. The Damages done to them have not been owing to Time, nor to the Ravages which *Rome* suffer'd, but to one single Monk. I will let thee into the Story.

The Father of Prince *Pamphili* becoming an excessive Devotee, chose a Monk † for his Director. This is a Custom established among the *Nazarenes*, who think that a Man cannot work out his own Salvation without the Help of a Priest. As soon as this Monk had gain'd an Ascendant over his new Penitent, he put it into his Head to leave him pious Legacies; and turn'd the Alms he gave for the Help of the poor Indians, for the Relief of the Missionaries, for the Propagation of the Faith, &c. into his own Pocket. He caus'd some of the Prince's Domestics to be turn'd away, who did not seem so much attach'd as they should be to his Order; and who had neglected to be admitted into the Congregations which he directed. In short, he put all the Prince's Kindred out of the way, that might have thwarted his Designs.

When the Monk had done all that he could do with his Fellow-Creatures, nothing would serve him but he must exercise his Authority over Things inanimate. The Fryar found fault with the very Nudity of the Statues in Prince *Pamphili*'s Gardens, of which there were near four hundred; and reproach'd him for it as a Crime; and 'twas immediately order'd, that notwithstanding the Heats in

* 'Tis at the *Borghese* Vineyard where are the grand Statues of *Seneca* expiring in the Bath, the Gladiator, and the Hermaphrodite.

† A Jesuit.

Italy, they shou'd be cloath'd and array'd, without being ever allow'd to appear naked, tho' their Robes shou'd disfigure them: Therefore all this Hord of Statues was cover'd with Drapery of Plaister, and was mangled with the Chissel in several Places, that it might stick the better to the Marble. In five or six Months after he had been at the Expence of those Habits, Prince *Pamphili* dies; upon which his Son was for taking off these Shirts of Plaister: But in spite of all the Care that was taken to repair the Injuries owing to the Zeal of the Director above-mentioned, several of the Statues were maim'd; so that this single Monk did as much Mischief as a whole Army of *Goths* and *Vandals*.

I often consider with myself how much a Man, who abandons himself to the pernicious Counsels of a fanatical Spirit, is expos'd to do Things that are extraordinary. The outragious Zeal of Prince *Pamphili*, puts me in mind of another Passage that happen'd in this Country. A certain sovereign Prince of *Germany* had contracted with *Sebastian Conchi*, an *Italian Painter*, for copying two Pictures done by *Giulio Romano*. The one represented the Rape of the *Sabines*, and the other *Cupid* and *Psyche*. A certain Monk, who was his Wife's spiritual Director, going to pay her a Visit, had the Curiosity to take a View of her Husband's Pictures. The Wife carried him into the Room, when, as Ill-luck would have it, the Painter was not there. The Fryar had no sooner cast his Eyes on the two Pictures, but he fell a raving like one mad; *You will be damn'd*, cry'd he; *there is no Forgiveness for you, not even in articulo mortis; no Absolution, no Absolution*. *O my God*, said the Woman, *what have I done? What have you done!* reply'd the Monk; *did you ever see such Pictures? do you suffer your Husband to be employ'd in such Work?* *My Husband*, said she, did

did not paint these Pictures ; 'twas another Painter. No matter who drew them, reply'd the zealous Director ; there's no Salvation for you, if you don't this Moment deface these scandalous Things, and tear them to Pieces. The Woman, seduc'd by the Fear of Hell, was just going upon this notable Jobb when the Painter came in, who trembled to see what a Risque his Pictures had run of being spoil'd. The Prince for whom they were design'd, had paid two thousand Crowns a-piece for them ; and poor *Sebastien Conchi* had been ruin'd, if the Monk's Fury had been gratify'd ; but he turn'd him out of his House, and forbad his Wife ever to go into that Room again as long as she liv'd.

In the Country where thou dwellest, dear *Monceca*, thou hast frequent Opportunities, as well as I, to see these Ravings of an immoderate Devotion, which resemble Madness ; yet they cannot be so common in *France* as they are in *Italy*, where the Monks have infallibly more Sway ; but as they are every where the same, 'tis impossible for them to keep themselves so far within Bounds as not to be guilty of some Rants.

As soon as I arrive at *Genoa*, I will write to thee. I don't know whether I shall make any long Stay there, but I believe I shall be obliged to go and spend some Time at *Turin*.

Take care of thy Health, dear *Monceca*, and may thy Trade always flourish and thy Riches increase.



LETTER XXVI.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS,
a Rabbi, at Constantinople.

Paris —

HAVING written several Letters to thee successively on serious Subjects, perhaps thou wilt be sorry I have nothing to send thee of Amusement. I should have been glad to have mix'd the Agreeable with the Profitable; but the last Subjects I treated of were hardly susceptible of Gaiety. For the sake of doing thee a Pleasure, I should be glad to have my Writings tinctured with those sprightly and happy Turns of Wit, which form the general Character of the *French*, who haye a sparkling Vivacity not to be found in any other Nation. Among the *English*, the *Germans*, and the Northern People, there is perhaps more good Sense and as much Learning, but there is not so much Wit.

But how it comes that the *French* have this Advantage, I can't imagine. The Climate can't be the Reason of it. If the Heat of the Sun rais'd the Imagination, what Nations are there in *Europe* that would have more Fire and Vivacity than the *Portuguese*? yet their Books are, for the generality, nothing more than a confus'd, indigested, unwieldy Medley of some Works, Theological and Scholastical; or a Parcel of Romances, stuff'd with Enchantments, Battles and Rapes. The Invention of such Chimæras does not require a lively Imagination, so much

much as an extravagant one. Before a true Taste was established in *Germany*, some Monks and other Authors had compos'd Books altogether as senseless, yet the Difference between the Climates of those two Countries is very great.

If Wit was the Gift of Air and the Sun, there would be almost the same Genius in every Inhabitant of the same Country ; yet what a Difference do we find betwixt the modern *Greeks* and those of learned *Athens*? The People of the *Levant* run into extravagant and monstrous Notions. Can the Authors of old *Greece* be liable to the same Reproach? Where do we find more Simplicity, more Grandeur and Eloquence at the same time, than in *Demosthenes*; more of Nature than in *Euripides*; more of the Majestic and Sublime than in *Homer* and *Sophocles*; more Perspicuity, more Conciseness, and more Accuracy than in *Xenophon*? Those Authors liv'd in the very same Country as the modern *Greeks* and *Turkish* Poets, and the same Sun that warm'd the one warms the other ; yet where do we meet with more extravagant Rant than in the Poetry of *Achmet Chelibi* *, and with more impertinent Stuff than in the Works of *Ibrahim*? which are nevertheless look'd upon as the Oracles and Master-pieces of the Age in which they were written.

* A modern *Turkish* Poet, who wrote several Poems in Praise of his Mistresses. In a poetical Composition of his, which I heard him read himself in the Palace of *France*, when he was at *Constantinople*, he compar'd the Face of a fine Woman to a Border enamell'd with a thousand sorts of Flowers, and her Aspect to the South Wind, which burns and destroys the richest Harvests. These were the Terms made use of by the Interpreter ; but he assur'd us, that the original Words were a hundred times more extravagant.

Good Taste, Masters, and the Acquaintance with good Authors, are of real Influence in the Conveyance of Wit; but they cannot be a decisive Reason for determining the Cause of that Vivacity and Fire which the *French* have above other Nations.

The *English* have excellent Judgment. They have among them Authors that are distinguished for all kinds of Writing, and such perhaps as outdo the *French*; but then they don't come up to their gay manner of Expression.

The *Germans* have produc'd Works of surprizing Erudition. Their Books are compos'd for the Learned, and are eminent for that which is Good and Useful, but the Agreeable is seldom to be found in them.

To illustrate my Notion I will make a Comparison betwixt a couple of Authors with whose Works and Merit, dear *Isaac*, thou art acquainted, and who are both esteem'd by all Nations that value themselves for Learning. *Locke* has written a Book which claims the Admiration of the Universe * for good Sense, Penetration, and the Force of Reasoning. A Temple and an Altar ought to be erected to a philosophical Work of such Excellence, and upon certain days of the Year the philosophical Compositions of *Thomas d' Aquinas*, *Scotus* and *Loyola* should be sacrific'd to it in Flames; nor would there be any Harm done, if the Commentators of *Aristotle* had the same Fate; and if such bad Company was stripp'd of the *Greek* Text.

Yet so great as the Glory of the Author is to whom I should be glad to see this Temple erected,

* Tho' all the Works of the illustrious *Locke* are excellent: yet I am of Opinion that his *Philosophical Essay on Human Understanding*, is preferable to all the others.

for the Method in which his Works are written, many People cannot discern their Merit : For as his sole View was to please Men of Learning, he has not hit upon the Knack of treating his Subjects in a gay easy manner, and of adapting them to the Capacity of many People, who have no Relish for a Work whose Ideas seem to them too much perplexed. The Person who has excell'd in the Talent of expressing the sublimest Subjects in a clear, concise and gay Stile is *Bayle*. His Writings, tho' nervous, and carry'd on with a lively Imagination and surprizing Erudition, are intelligible to every Reader. A Woman may learn more Physics and Metaphysics from his *Sentiments upon the Comets*, than ten Regents of Philosophy ever taught in all their Lives.

The more I search, dear *Isaac*, into the Cause of that Imagination and Vivacity of the *French*, the more I am at a loss to find out any that is conclusive. I desire thee to write thy Sentiments to me upon this head, and shall long for them with Impatience. I don't doubt but the Acquaintance thou hast made in thy Travels will be a very great Help to thy Ideas.

I have no News to send thee, no Adventure having happen'd at *Paris* for almost 8 or 10 days past, which seems a Thing extraordinary, it being the very Theatre of Folly, Love and Gallantry. The Chevalier *de Maisin* told me a Story of an Adventure that happen'd some time ago to one of the Opera Girls, which I thought a very pleasant one.

A young Gentleman, viz. the Chevalier *de S****, an Officer in the Regiment of *C*—, fell in love with one of the Singing-Women, whose Name was *la Petit-Pas*. He was amiable enough ; but as it generally fares with those Blades, had not much ready Cash. Gold is what young Fellows are seldom incumb'red with ; and yet, without that Metal there

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is no Intrigue can advance with the Girls of the Opera: But by reason of the Difficulty of his Success, and his Impatience to be with his Mistress, he had recourse to an Expedient which was pretty extraordinary. He had never spoke to *la Petit-Pas*, nor did she know him; but her Performance on the Stage set his Heart all on fire, and he resolved to be her domestic Servant. He thought it an excellent Project, and did not doubt but some lucky Opportunity would fall out, by and by, and that he should improve it to his Advantage. He enter'd into her Service in the quality of a Lackey, and from a Captain in C——'s Regiment rose to be chief Waiting-Man to a Singer. He attended her with infinite Affiduity, and she was glad to think what a happy Bargain she had made. *Pierrot* never budg'd out of Madam's Chamber, but was beforehand with her Wishes, and she was obey'd before she commanded.

The Spark had been four or five days with her, and not a jot farther advanc'd in his Amour. The Pleasure he had in seeing *la Petit-Pas* was disturb'd by a great many bitter Mortifications. There came several fine Gentlemen to visit this Singer, and poor *Pierrot* was forc'd to wait in the Anti-chamber to hear their Laughing, Singing and Dalliance. What Punishment was this for a tender Lover! But he was obliged to put up with it, *No Money no Swiss; No Gold, no Wench at the Opera.* He was thoroughly convinc'd of the Truth of these two Proverbs, and thought the latter much truer than the former. But Love took pity of his Anguish. *La Petit-Pas* being invited to sup at a Country House near Paris, *Pierrot* set out with her after the Opera was over, to wait on her at Table; but how great was the Chevalier's Surprize when he found that the Person who gave the Supper, was Lieutenant-Colonel of the very Regiment in which he was Captain! What to

determine he knew not. If he kept out of the way he should be liable to be turn'd off; if he waited at Table he was afraid of being discover'd. However he chose the latter, and thought that disguis'd as he was the Lieutenant-Colonel would perhaps take no notice of the Resemblance between *Pierrot* and the Chevalier de S——s. However he was known. *La Petit-Pas* was so well pleased with his Stratagem, that when he came to wait upon her, she made him sit down to Table with her, and after Supper carry'd him back in her Coach. *Pierrot* pass'd the Night with his Mistress, who probably found him as agreeable a Lover as he was a zealous Domestic. They were after this very intimate, and the Officer's Happiness was perfectly undisturbed till the Moment he was obliged to return to his Garrison.

Sometimes one meets with Courtezans who are ambitious of acquiring an honourable Character, and capable of feeling a delicate Passion. This happens seldom, but there are several Examples of it. When their Hearts are once touch'd, they love more passionately than other Women do, the Arrows with which they are wounded being infinitely keener; for they surmount the Byass that inclines them to Debauchery, and the Habit which they have contracted in it. They are only capable of great Passions; for they either remain insensible, or else they love to excess, their Hearts knowing no Medium. Women have been known in this Country, who tho' their Lives have been irregular, have afterwards prov'd chaste; and Love has had more influence over them than the Exhortations and Sermons of twenty Preachers. An Author who is an Imitator of *Aesop* to such a Degree that he is as much an Original as his Model *, tells a Story of a *Roman* Courtezan who paid the

* *La Fontaine.*

Tribute

Tribute of a tender Heart to Love. There have been many others in the same Case; and if we may believe antient Writers, the famous Courtezan *Lais* was lavish of those Favours to *Diogenes*, which she sold so dear to the *Greeks* that were of the greatest Distinction †.

Fare thee well, dear *Isaac*, and be as punctual as thou can'st in thy Answer.

† One of *Aristippus*'s Domestics being sorry to see what Sums his Master laid out upon *Cais* the Courtezan, said to him one day, *Tho' you pay so dear for that Woman, she abandons herself without Reserve to that Cynic Diogenes, who does not give her a Doit. I pay her, reply'd Aristippus, not that she mayn't lie with others, but that she may lie with me.* Οὐειδέζομενος υπὸ εἰκέτη, διὸ τοῦ μεν αὐτὴν τοσεῖον αγγυεῖον δίδους η δὲ προκα Διογένειν ακούντιναι απεκριθεὶς εχώ Δαιδὶ χορηγῷ πωλλά, οὐα αὐτὸς αὐτῆς αἴσθαντο, οὐχ οὐδὲ γηλάος. Athenæi Deipnot. lib. xiii. p. 188.





LETTER XXVII.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS,
a Rabbi, at Constantinople.

Paris —

IN my late Letters I sent thee an account of what I had observed most remarkable in the Character of the Nobility, the Courtezans, and the Clergy. What remains for me is, to give thee a just Idea of the common People.

They are not Slaves to the Nobility in this Kingdom as they are in *Germany*; nor, on the other hand, are they so free as they are in *England*. Their Situation is in a just Medium, which screens them from the Persecutions of a number of petty Tyrants, and retains them within due Bounds and hinders them from being so insolent and brutish as the Populace are too apt to be. The too great Privileges of the *English* render them intolerable. The common People, who are ever at liberty to do what they list, being accustom'd to see all stoop before them, are prone to create Changes and Catastrophes like to those which are occasion'd by the Revolt of the Janizaries.

In *France* the People submit to the Obedience due to the Sovereign, and are the King's Subjects without being the Nobility's Slaves. A Lord at his own Manor has no Right to the Estates or Persons of his Vassals. If they do but pay him the Rents, Tents, &c. which they owe him, he has no Right

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to molest them. They are Subjects to the King, and under his Protection. If they offer to commit any Violence against them, or demand any thing unreasonable of them, they have Recourse to regular Justice; and it very often happens, that a Nobleman is cast by his Vassal.

Yet for all the Care that is taken in this Country to hinder the common People from being trampled on by the Nobility, they are always put in mind of the Respect due to those Persons whose distinguished Rank is owing to their Birth. They are taught to preserve the Regard which is due to them; and tho' it is not desir'd that they should be Slaves, yet it is expected that they should submit with Decency, and observe a certain Subordination which is necessary to the Peace and Welfare of the State.

Too great Power in the People is as bad an Extreme as the despotic Power of a King. I am persuaded, dear *Isaac*, that for the sake of maintaining the Harmony in a Kingdom, it is absolutely necessary that *there should be a Barter or Retaliations of the Duties of a Sovereign to his Subjects, and of the Subjects to their Sovereign**. But on the other hand it is my Opinion that the Goodness, Equity and Justice which a Prince ought to have, should in no respect abate the Subordination and Obedience of the People.

If a good King ought to be the Father of his Subjects, they ought to pay him the Submission of Children, the Duties of the one being as sacred as those of the others; and we see, that in a Monarchy where the Prince blends his Interest with those of his People, every thing prospers, succeeds and abounds.

* This is a Saying of the Wife *La Bruyere*; but which are the most slavish, and most painful Duties, he does not pretend to determine.

When the Titles of Great, August, Invincible, are given to a Sovereign, I look upon all those Epithets as Marks of a boundless Ambition, and as secret Wounds which the State feels, by the Expence which it costs the Prince before he has acquir'd a Glory so ill grounded.

When a Sovereign is call'd the Father of his People, that Title alone is his Panegyric; for it contains in it all the Qualities necessary for his making Men happy.

No body is truly great farther than he is just. This common Maxim, tho' applicable to all Mankind, is even more so to Princes than to meer private Men. Where is the Justice of abusing that Rank and Birth for which they are obliged to Heaven, to make a Million of Men unhappy?

There are some Sovereigns who reduce their Severities into Maxims; they make an Art of their Tyranny, and instead of being sensible of the Horror of their Conduct, they applaud themselves for it, and think that they owe a part of their imaginary Glory to the Hardness of their Hearts, and their little Compassion for Mankind. These blind Princes are the more to be pitied, because it is almost impossible for them to be undeceiv'd of their Mistake; for the People with whom they are surrounded being vile Slaves to their Greatness, and continually studying how to flatter their Vices, and to deify them, are the last Men in the World that offer to let them into the Knowledge of disagreeable Truths.

There are few Persons that have so much need of wholesome Advice as Sovereigns, who often draw upon themselves the Hatred and Enmity of their People by such Accidents and Occasions as they might have avoided, if they had been made sensible of their Errors: But Favourites and Couriers

tiers having always an Eye to their own Fortune, more than to the Honour of their Master, don't stop him, tho' they see him plunging into Errors; for the giving friendly and sincere Advice to a Sovereign, is look'd upon at Court, as a rude and dangerous Attempt.

If Princes did but know how much their lawful Prerogatives are bounded, they would look upon their Rank or Condition to be more irksome than delightsome, and more gay than substantial. As they are the chief Judges of their Subjects, so they are their Fathers. These are the Titles of their Institution. What Power do they not give them? And to what Duties do they not bind them? As Judges they ought incessantly to be upon the Watch to see the Laws observ'd, of which they are the Depositaries, and to which they themselves ought to be inviolably attach'd. As Fathers, they are obliged to see that their People don't want, to assist them, by sparing of their Lives, and not to sacrifice them, to the foolish Ambition of making Conquests, &c.

If one seriously reflects upon the Frailty of Mankind, one would be surpriz'd that any one Man should fancy himself worthy to command the rest. 'Twas in his Wrath that God formerly gave Kings to *Israel*.

A Royal Infant in the Cradle is rever'd as a God, the very Moment it is born. It scarce attains to the Age of Reason, but it becomes the Arbiter of the Destiny of several Millions of Men, who are the Victims of his Caprice. If he loves War he is like to prove the Destruction of an infinite Number of his Subjects. If he is magnificent, and delights in erecting Palaces and public Structures, he will impoverish them. Thus they are always doom'd to be the Victims of his various Whimsies. Eight or

Ten thousand Men, at least, are no more to a Sovereign than Eight or Nine Hundred Thousand Livres for the Purchase of a Place. If sometimes he seems to hesitate in his Projects, if he spares their Lives, he resembles the Man who stands hard for a Purchase, and is better acquainted than another with the Price and Value of Money.

A Philosopher is astonish'd when he hears of a Hundred Thousand Men drawn up in three Lines, to fall with Fury upon a Hundred Thousand others, purely to gratify the Ambition of two Persons. Is there any thing so extraordinary as to see two Men born four hundred Leagues one from another, and who have no manner of Quarrel with each other, fall upon one another like Madmen, without any Motive to inspire all their Actions and Conduct, but a wild Resentment; Their Sovereign's Hatred is the Foundation of theirs, which subsides with that of the Prince.

I don't wonder that in just Wars the Subjects enter with Pleasure into their Sovereign's Interests, nor to find Republicans defending their Country with Zeal, because their Rights and Liberties co-exist with its Safety; but under arbitrary Power there is no Patriotism. Under a King, who is a Tyrant, and a Despiser of the Laws, the Subjects are but Slaves. Soldiers formed out of such Subjects must be mean-spirited Troops, instead of being an Army ready to distinguish itself; yet there are other Things which supply the want of Love of their Country; Self-interest, the Desire of Glory, and the Service of the Prince, are of the same Effect in a despotic State.

The common People never distinguish the true Interest of their Country, and those in the Administration are oblig'd to represent it to them. In a Monarchy, a good King, who is the Father of his Subjects,

Subjects, ought to take Advice of such Persons as are of the greatest Experience; and in a Commonwealth, they who are at the Head of Affairs cannot be too careful in guarding against such Opinions as may be apt to deceive them.

The Great Art of Commanding is the most difficult of all Sciences. The Violation of the Laws is a Crime, as is also the too punctual Observation of them. For the Good of the People and the Country, 'tis necessary to know how to accommodate them to the Times and Circumstances. Sometimes certain Customs are to be prescribed cautiously, which it is dangerous to trace to their Original. For if one were to go to the Source of all Customs, one should often meet with Vices that are abolish'd; and for which those Usages were established.

Yet arbitrary Law ought not to be established, because it would draw a Train of Misfortunes and Inconveniences along with it. Equity is not clearly writ in the Hearts of Men, nor is there any discerning it but thro' the Veil of their Passions, which infinitely disguise it.

Strict and solid Justice ought to be exempt from Prejudice and Passion, and should be confin'd within regular Bounds, and freed from false Notions and Fancies. Between the two Excesses of adhering too strictly to the Law, and not abiding enough by it, there is a just Medium; which is the most necessary Article for the Good of the People, and the Honour of their Governors: And from this Wisdom results the Tranquility and Welfare of a State.

Fare thou well, dear *Isaac*, and live contented and happy.



LETTER XXVIII.

JACOB BRITO to AARON MONCECA.

Genoa —

I Have been at *Genoa* for a Fortnight or more, and don't think the Beauties I see in this City, at all inferior to those of *Rome*. 'Tis full of magnificent Palaces, and has some very noble Pieces of Architecture with Pictures and Statues done by the greatest Masters *. Here I again find some of those Things which I saw in the antient Metropolis of the World; but of all the Objects that offer themselves to my View, nothing strikes me so much as the Difference betwixt the Manners of the *Genoese* and the *Romans*. I think it extraordinary that the Humour and Inclination of two People that inhabit the same Kingdom, or the same Climate, should be so remote from, and so unlike to, each other.

The *Romans* are naturally sluggish, Enemies to Labour, and extravagantly indolent and effeminate.

* The finest Pictures that are at *Genoa*, are those of the famous *Soliman*, plac'd in one of the principal Rooms of the Doge's Palace. The two magnificent Statues which the famous *Puget* carv'd at *Genoa* are in the Church which is built at the End of *Ponte Carignano*. This Church is full of beautiful Pictures: But the finest Church in the City is that of the *Annunciation*.

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The *Genoese* are industrious, addicted to Commerce, ready to undertake and to endure every thing, if they foresee that their Pains will bring them the least Profit. The *Campagna di Roma* is an excellent Soil, and good to cultivate ; yet nothing grows there but Brambles and Weeds, which serve for Shelter to Snakes, Vipers, and a thousand other venomous Creatures ; whereas the Hills about *Genoa* are cover'd with Olives, Oranges and Citrons, which the Inhabitants have forc'd Nature to produce ; and the Industry of the *Genoese* has turn'd a Chain of horrid Rocks into the finest Garden in *Europe*.

The *Romans* are insupportably arrogant, which continually involves them in Quarrels with all the sovereign Princes. The Court of *Rome* is always so intent upon aggrandizing itself, that it lets no Opportunity slip for that end. The *Genoese*, so far from seeking to augment their State, think only of the Means to preserve what they are possessed of, without pretending to encroach upon the Rights of other Sovereigns. This is their only Study, and the sole Aim of all their Politics. Yet their Situation is very critical. *France* is a formidable Neighbour, which they hate very much in their Hearts, but are obliged to dissemble their Sentiments. Before the late Changes which happen'd in *Italy*, they look'd upon the Emperor as their Support against *France* ; and tho' they did not dare to favour his Interests publicly, it was easy to perceive how they stood affected. Since the Loss of the *Milaneze*, they are in a manner become Slaves to *France* *. There is something in their Misfortune which has a Resemblance to the Fate of the old sick Lion ; for there's not a Prince in *Italy*, but has indirectly insulted them, and demanded something of them

* This Letter was written before the Peace made in 1736.

which he never did before *. And to aggravate their Misfortunes, the Island of *Corsica*, which belongs to them, is again revolted from them. They have suffer'd several Shocks from it, and are not a jot farther advanced than they were at the Beginning of the War. If the *Genoese* had been as politic in the Management of their domestic Affairs, as they have been in their Disputes with foreign Crowns, *Corsica* had never taken Arms, and its Inhabitants, instead of revolting, would have been content with their Lot, and have sacrific'd their Lives and Fortunes for the Safety of the Republic ; but the Oppression they have suffer'd from the Governors sent to rule over them, together with the Ill-nature and Arrogance of the *Genoese* Nobility, have forc'd them to use violent Means.

This part of my Letter leads me insensibly to the Form of a Republican Government. Long has it been disputed, whether it is preferable to a Monarchical Government. They who are the Advocates for Liberty maintain, that 'tis dangerous to be subject to the Caprice of one Man only ; and that 'tis hard to be ty'd to the Will and Pleasure of a single Person, who cannot be put in the right way again when once he has gone astray from it. Absolute Power seems to them, in some measure, contrary to the Law of Nations and Nature. They can't bear that Mortals should have a larger Share in their Government and Conduct than what they please to let them take. Those, on the contrary,

* The King of *Sardinia* has improv'd the favourable Conjunctions which the last War gave him to obtain a great many Things of the *Genoese*, which he would never have got, had it not been for the Alliance of *France* and *Spain*. I must say it here by the way, that I don't believe there are two People that hate one another more than the *Genoese* and *Piedmontese* do.

who are for Monarchical Power, exclaim against the Inconveniences that arise from a Subjection to the Will of a hundred different Persons. This, say they, is to have a hundred Kings instead of one, and to be born a meer Republican is to be subject to an infinite Number of Sovereigns. If there must be Submission, 'tis as good to obey one Prince as several. What matters it whom I serve, if I must be reduc'd to this Condition? Besides, when a King is good, he makes his whole State happy; there needs nothing more than his Virtue alone to render a Kingdom fortunate; but in a Free State, the Virtue of one Senator is defeated by the Vice of another; and the Disinterestedness of one Man in an Office is check'd by the Avarice of one of his Colleagues. Thus there is always a Conflict between the chief Men of a Republic, which does a Prejudice to private Men.

This is a main Defect in the *Genoese* Government. The Nobility are Blood-suckers and Tyrants over the meaner sort of People. Under the vain Pretext of an imaginary Liberty, of which they give them a Glimpse, they strip them of all their Riches, and share the Fruit of their Labours.

The Republic of *Holland* is not in the like Case. Its wise and moderate Government has set Limits between the Power of the Magistrates, and the Privileges of private Persons. The one have, by the Laws of the State, a Power which is necessary, but bounded; and the others pay an Obedience, but such an Obedience in which there is no Semblance of Slavery. A sort of Equality which they take care to preserve, is the Basis of so wise a Harmony. But as there is nothing without some small Fault, the too great Credit which the *Dutch* People enjoy, produces a sort of Brutality, which, however, is only the Fault of those of the lowest Rank.

If,

If, without Partiality for the Customs of one's native Country, one considers the various Forms of Government, 'tis hard to know to which to give the Preference. There is in all Countries that which is less good and less bad in some than in others, and 'tis a difficult Matter for which to determine. The Monarchical State, conducted wisely, is a happy and fortunate State. The Republican Government, when 'tis shar'd prudently between the Magistrates and the People, like that of the United Provinces, certainly secures perpetual Liberty. But, on the other hand, these different Governments are liable to terrible Changes. One *Nero* does more Harm than half a score *Titus*'s can do Good. It was impossible for *Henry IV.* to repair the hundredth part of the Damages occasion'd by his Predecessor *Henry III.* There happen too in Republics, Events which are equally prejudicial to the Good of the State. The Hatred of some private Men plunges all the People in surprizing Calamities. *Sylla* and *Marius*, *Pompey* and *Cæsar*, *Augustus* and *Mark Anthony* sacrificed the Lives of more *Romans*, than a hundred Years War with the Enemies of the Republic: And the late Difference among the *Swiss* has done them such Prejudice that they will feel it for a long Time.

'Tis morally impossible to find that Form of Government, which has not both its Good and its Evil; and that which has least of the latter is the best. 'Twould be in vain to go about to determine whether is the most preferable, the Monarchical or the Republican Government. As their Value and Merit are owing only to certain Circumstances, when these don't occur, one is justify'd in giving the Preference alternately, either to the one or to the other, according to the various Occurrences.

Yet

Yet it may boldly be affirmed, that among the Monarchical and Republican Governments, there are some not so bad as others. 'Tis easy to perceive, that *France* is not subject to the Troubles and Revolutions of the *Ottoman Empire*. The Laws by which the Power of the *French* Monarch is fix'd, are the surest Pledges of its Duration and the Support of his Authority. On the other hand, the despotic Will of the Sultans often proves their Destruction; and they would be safer on their Throne, if it was not so much in their Power to gratify all their Caprices.

There is still a wider Difference betwixt the *Dutch* Government and the *Genoese* Government, than there is between that of the Court of *France* and the *Ottoman Porte*. The common People at *Genoa* have only the Shadow of Liberty; for under a specious Name they are Slaves to all the Senators*. A Burgher pays as much Deference and Submission to a Magistrate of the Privy Council, or of the Grand Council, as a *Parisian* does to *Louis XV.* and the *Genoese* Nobles convince the People every Day, that they are Masters of the Government, and that Employments and Dignities are only cut out for themselves.

A private *Genoese*, let his Merit be what it will, is confin'd all his Life-time to the obscure Honours of some subaltern Employment. He is for ever banish'd by a severe Law from the considerable Posts of the Republic, to which none but the Nobility can aspire. Virtue, Courage, and Constancy are much better recompens'd in a Monarchical State, where such Endowments may promote Persons to the highest Rank; and tho' meer private Persons have more Difficulty to attain to it than the Great

* They are even more so to the Monks and Inquisitors.

Men, they are not, however, excluded from it by the Laws.

The Dutch Government has regulated the Rights of its Subjects with such Justice and Equity, as encourages them to defend their Country, in which they find Peace and Tranquility, and the Path to Honours open to their Ambition, when they are capable of enjoying them. The Man that has Merit, is capable of attaining to any thing. When an eminent Post is to be fill'd, they don't consult old musty Records for the Titles of their Ancestors, and no Regard is had to the Qualities of those that liv'd two hundred Years ago. That Reward is given to present Virtue which it deserves; and whoever will be a great Man in *Holland*, must be a virtuous one. In a Government so well conducted, all the Subjects are the Children of their Country. In the Republic of *Genoa*, the common People look upon one another almost as if they were all Foundlings. They scarce know their Mother. Consequently the Government has but little Relief to expect from their Inclinations. The most absolute Sovereigns are much more dear to their Subjects, than the Heads of this Republic are to their Fellow-Citizens. As under despotic Power there is no Patriotism, so Self-interest, the Envy of attaining to Honours, and gratifying one's Ambition, Hopes which are denied to the *Genoese*, supply the place of the Love of one's Country, and of an Emulation to support its Liberty and Privileges. The Post is just going off, and I am forc'd to put an End to my Letter.

Farewell, and may Heaven protect thee against thy Enemies, and make thy Trade flourish.



LETTER XXIX.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS,
a Rabbi, at Constantinople.

Paris — — —

I Have acquainted thee of several Methods invented by the Monks to gull the People of their Money, but I have said nothing to thee concerning the Fund of their principal Revenue. They have made the *Nazarenes* believe, that there's a Place where the Soul, after Death, goes to make Atonement for such small Faults as don't deserve the Wrath of God *. They have appropriated to themselves the Prerogative of releasing those who are condemn'd to lie in this Place of Expiation; and for a certain Sum of Money they limit the Extent of the Justice of Heaven. They dispose of the sovereign Being at their own Will and Pleasure; and one would be tempted to think they had enter'd into Covenants with him for the sole Appointment of such Persons as should be admitted to the Sight of him.

There are some *Nazarenes* indeed who have refus'd to submit to this Doctrine, and who maintain, that at the Moment of their Death God determines their Fate. Against these the Monks have risen, and declared themselves separate from their Communion; and they would sooner put up with the Disbelief of a Hell, than a Denial of this pretended

* Purgatory.

Purgatory. Hell, in short, is of very little use to the Priests; for when a Man is damned, he has no more need of Prayers; because Collects, Candles, and Charities make no Alteration in his Doom; whereas, when a Person is in Purgatory, if his Heirs have but a little Money, they are not releas'd from it without a handsome Deposit; and nothing less will serve than six Quintals of Wax, and Alms for building a Chapel to some antient or modern Saint, and for Prayers to be sung in full Choirs, &c.

When there's a considerable Sum paid down for a Soul condemn'd to the expiatory Flames, the Monks take care not to release it all at once, it being a good Perquisite which they don't care to part with. They only give it some little Ease, by rendering the Fire which purges it less vehement; for they order those that attend the Forge, to blow the Coals more or less, in proportion to the Sum of Money which they receive. It often happens, that the Monks permit some of those Souls, for whose Deliverance their Friends forget to make a Collection, to make a Trip into this World to admonish them to raise a small Sum of Money, rather than let them lie in a Place so uneasy. When they make their Appearance here, they are dress'd in a Robe of a Flame Colour, to denote their State of Suffering; whereas the Souls of the Damn'd, when they make their Appearance, have Habits that are sable and dismal. Those of the Happy have long Robes of Linnen white as Snow. And if a Man does but dip into the Books of the Miracles of the *Nazarenes* *, 'tis easy to know what are the Dresses of all the Souls; and by the Tone of their Voice they can distinguish the State of Souls in the other World †.

* See the *Institution de la Fête des Morts*.

† See the Book intitul'd *Pensez-y-bien; the Life of St. Bruno, &c.*

What I have been saying of the Credulity of the *Nazarenes*, will appear so strange, that thou wilt be apt to think I have laid the Colours on too thick; but I assure thee, that the Picture is drawn to the Life, and conformable to the Truth. Thou wilt be inclin'd to believe what I tell thee, if thou dost but consider, that they are only the meaner sort of People who give into these *Chimæras*. The Men who by Reflection, Study, or the meer Light of Reason, are convinc'd of the Ridiculousness of these Frauds, don't give themselves the Trouble to undeceive the weak and silly Vulgar, for fear of drawing a Croud of Enemies upon their Backs, and only sigh in secret for the Errors of the common People. As there is no Religion in the World, in which the People are so superstitious as in the *Nazarene*; so neither is there any where that People of a certain Rank give less Credit to one half of the Stories that are told by the Monks.

The Preachers at *Paris* are perpetually declaiming against the Neglect of the *Nazarene* Precepts, and foretelling what a considerable Change will soon happen in their Religion, if there be not more Obsequiousness and more Credit paid to their Sentiments; yet their Preachments add little to their Credit, because Reason, by bearing its Light to their Minds, makes their Impostures appear as plain as the Sun at Noon-day.

In the Tenth Century, the Monks took it into their Heads to preach that the End of the World was at hand. They persuaded the People, that as the Earth would soon be reduced to nothing, they had no more need of any of its Goods; so that every one ran to carry his Effects to the Clergy; the Priests were the universal Heirs of all *Europe*, and in less than thirty or forty Years time, they had in *France*, *Italy*, *Spain*, *Portugal*, &c. one half of the

the Revenues of those Kingdoms. At last People's Eyes were open'd ; and in the Centuries which follow'd that wherein Folly reign'd, the Bandage which conceal'd the Truth by little and little fell off.

About two hundred Years ago there were two famous Men *, that revenged the Cause of good Sense when under Oppression. Being supported by Reason, they struggled against the Ignorance of their Age, were the Restorers of the Sciences, and prepar'd the Way for that Croud of great Men who followed ; but they were look'd upon as Disturbers of the public Peace, by reason of the Wars and Disorders that were the Consequences of their Sentiments. But besides that this odious Title justly belongs only to their Persecutors, ought one to be sorry for the Troubles that lead to a solid Calm, that render a Man acquainted with himself, and rescue him from the Ignorance in which he is stagnated ?

The *Nazarenes*, who are Enemies to the Sentiments of those two Doctors, do them the Justice to own, that they disengaged Reason from the Prejudices which clouded it ; and that they were the Restorers of the Sciences that were banish'd ; and they only condemn them for having push'd their Opinion too far with respect to certain Articles of the *Nazarene* Creed ; and for having render'd Religion too plain, by endeavouring to go so far back as its first Institution ; for, say they, Rites and Ceremonies derive their Authority from Possession and Custom ; and that 'tis dangerous to trace them to their Origin. Laws and Precepts are, in their Opinion, like Rivers that swell and grow famous as they glide along ; People who have no other Rule but the Institution of a Custom which several

* *Luther and Calvin.*

Ages have render'd antique, and are always for going up to its Source, are subject to go astray.

In Matters exclusive of Religion, these Opinions seem to me to be true, but in those relating to Faith and Belief, the plainer that is which we profess, the more I think it is to be commended. It wou'd have been happy for us to have had two Doctors that had done so much for *Judaism*, as those did for *Nazarenism*; for then we should have been delivered from a Yoke of Ceremonies, which appears to me more and more useless every Day.

To be plain with you, the more I devote myself to Study and Philosophy, the less Opinion have I of the Visions of our Rabbies. I once told thee what I thought of them. For the Good of *Israel* I could wish they were all as discreet as thee: We should not then be reproach'd with those Opinions, which, tho' they are not prejudicial to the Fundamentals of our Religion, and do not appertain to it, do nevertheless hurt us in the Opinion of those who don't search Things to the Bottom. When one offers to judge of a Religion, one ought to strip off all the Superficies, and only examine the Inside and Basis of it, the Thing wherein consists Belief or Faith. But what can one venture to decide with regard to a Heap of Maxims and Customs of no Signification; and which are no more to Religion than Dress is to a Man, and only serve to hide the Faults or Beauties of a Law?

Suppose, for once, that a *Chinese* Philosopher, a Disciple of *Confucius*, who has no notion of *Europe*, should be brought into it, and desir'd to give his Judgment of the Beauty of *Judaism*. A *Nazarene* at first Dash gives him a true Picture of it, but such a Picture as tends to ridicule it. ‘The Law, says ‘*he to him*, of the *Israelites*, consists in cutting no ‘Bread but with their own Knife; in not eating of ‘certain

• certain Meats, even tho' they were to starve ; in
• singing with certain Grimaces ; in bleeding the
• Creatures with their own Hands ; in drinking no
• Wine that is pressed by those of a different Reli-
• gion ; in believing that they may deceive all that
• are not of their own Communion, &c.' What
would this *Chinese* Philosopher think after so ridi-
culous an Account of it ? But if an *Israelite*, after
stripping off the Externals of his Religion, comes
and shews it to him naked ; if he tells him that he
believes one God, a Spirit immense, eternal, and
sovereignly powerful, who made all Things out of
Nothing, who sustains every thing by his Will,
who punishes the Bad and rewards the Good ; then
the Philosopher, charm'd with these Notions, and
astonish'd at the Truth with which he finds his
Heart affected, would confess, that the *Jew* be-
lieves and follows what the purest Reason plainly
demonstrates. If in the rest of the *Jewish* Law he
perceives any Errors, he blames the Men that in-
troduced them, and distinguishes the Essential from
the Superficial.

The Faith of the *Nazarenes*, as it is preach'd up by their Doctors of the first Class, has something more glaring than ours. They build upon our chief Principles, but they seem to have refin'd upon the Consequences. Our Morality has something savage, whereas theirs seems to be dictated by the Word of God. Integrity, Candour, the Forgiveness of Enemies, and all the Virtues which the Heart and Mind are capable of embracing, are strictly enjoin'd them. Nothing can dispense them from their Duty. A true *Nazarene* is a perfect Philosopher. In the other Religions, a vile Slave seems only to serve God from Interest. The *Nazarenes* are the only Sect who have a filial Affection for so good a Father. They serve him • for

for his own Sake, and not with a View to Rewards, whereas we *Jews* have no other Motive for our Prayers, but Riches, Plenty, and the good Things of this World. In all times we have had little Thoughts of a World to come. When *Jerusalem* was in its Glory we had among us, and in our Communion, some of our Brethren who believed the Soul was mortal *. If they pray'd to God, if they ask'd Favours of him, it was not for their being sav'd after Death. This was the least of their Thoughts ; and when Life was a Burden to them and they were too unfortunate, they could presume to hinder God from continuing their Misfortunes by putting an end to their own Lives. Do but consider how ridiculous was that Error which admitted of a God, and at the same limited his Power.

Fare thee well, dear *Isaac* ; 'tis a long time since I heard from thee.

* The Sadducees.





LETTER XXX.

ISAAC ONIS, *a Rabbi*, at Constantinople,
to AARON MONCECA.

Constantinople — — —

THE Death of the Basha *Osman* *, of which thou art so desirous to know the Particulars, was a Piece of News published at *Constantinople*, where every body now knows it to be false. This Basha is still in *Bosnia*, and what gave occasion to the Report of his Death was a dangerous Illness which brought him to the Brink of the Grave, from whence he is not yet perfectly recover'd, and 'tis well if he has not some dangerous Relapse.

The Constancy with which *Osman* look'd Death in the Face, hath acquir'd him the Esteem of all Men who are pleas'd with Magnanimity. As soon as the Physicians gave him over, the Basha finding there was no hopes of his Recovery, divided such Effects of his as were at his Disposal, among those who serv'd him, and dictated a Letter to the Grand Vizier, informing him of the State in which he left the Province that had been committed to his Care. He also wrote to *Paris* to the Countess *de Bonneval* his late Spouse, and to one of his Acquaintance with whom he had always corresponded by Letters, ever since he liv'd in *Turky*. After this he talk'd familiarly to his Secretary concerning the principal Events

* Count *de Bonneval*.

of his Life. ‘ The remembrance of me, said he, will be to remember an Instance of the compleatest Misfortune and the firmest Constancy. All the Crosses I have met with have not diverted my Thoughts to be reveng’d on mine Enemies; and tho’ I have not been so happy as to see my Designs take effect, yet the Confusion and Consternation I have put them into for fear of the Evils which I intended them, is some Satisfaction to me for those that I have not been able to bring upon them.’

During the Basha’s Illness several Events happen’d which discover’d his Fortitude of Mind under the Weight that was upon him. A certain *Nazarene* Priest, imagining that the Basha in his last Moments would reflect upon the Prejudices he had imbibed in his Childhood, disguis’d himself like a *Turk*, and desir’d to speak with him on a Matter of Importance. *Osman* during the whole Course of his Illness always manag’d his own Affairs himself; for his Case being only a Fever on his Spirits, and a languid State of Body, he had no acute Pains to torment him; and therefore he order’d the pretended *Turk*, who said he had Secrets of Consequence to reveal to him, to be admitted.

The Priest had scarce sat down with *Osman*, but he confess’d his Disguise to him, and desired him that he would please to remember, that he was born a *Nazarene*, and that he would be for ever undone, if he did not return to the Law which he had abandon’d. He then made a long Preachment, to which the Basha attended very calmly.

When the Priest had made an end of his long studied Harangue, ‘ I will now, says *Osman*, give you as wholesome Advice as all that which you have so lavishly bestow’d upon me. Be cautious for the future how you take such Steps as you have

' ventur'd on at this time. The *Turks* have no Notion of Jesting in religious Matters. If they knew that you went about to seduce a Proselyte from them you would not easily get out of the Scrape. All the *Mussulmen* are not so cool in the Interests of *Mahomet* as I am. Therefore don't run any further Risque of being impaled.'

The *Nazarene* Priest was going to be more importunate with *Osman*, but he told him, *There's enough for this Bout; the Audience you have desir'd has been long enough. What shall I gain nothing then upon your Soul?* reply'd the Priest. No, said the Basha, but you have converted my Purse, which I fancy is more dear to you than my Soul. And he immediately ordered his Secretary, who was the only Witness of this Conversation, to give the *Nazarene* 100 Pieces, and dismiss him.

I have been told another Passage about *Osman*, which I own struck me, and proves what a Freedom of Mind he preserv'd during his Sickness. His *Iman**^{*}, who dearly lov'd Money, to such a degree that he was suspected to be a Knave, often teaz'd him with the Rehearsal of *Mahomet*'s rare Qualities, and of the Happiness which he was going to taste with that Prophet's Favourites. Hear me, said the Basha, do'st thou think after thou art dead, to be in the Number of his Favourites? Without doubt, reply'd *Iman*, and having had the Happiness to serve the Prophet in this World, to be sure, I shall have a distinguished Rank in the other. So much the worse, said the Basha, I should think myself in very bad Company with the happy Mussulmen, if such great Knaves go thither as thou art. I should chuse rather to go with the Nazarenes whom thou believest to be damn'd; for among them there are a great many honest People.

* A Turkish Priest.

They

They tell twenty other Stories of *Osman*, which I shall not now mention. All the Philosophers here look upon him with more Veneration than the Sages of Antiquity did upon *Seneca*. They think that the latter died with a Regret that he could live no longer, and that the Discourse of that Pagan Philosopher shew'd a secret Chagrin that he was oblig'd to shorten his Days; whereas the other, without fearing Death, and without desiring it, look'd on it stedfastly with a dry Eye, and a manly Assurance. In the same manner did *Petronius* look upon the Horrois of Death; and his last Words, his dying Sentiments, did not contradict his former ones. He shew'd Joy and Serenity of Mind in the midst of the Bath which receiv'd the Blood that spun from his Veins. In my Opinion *Petronius* died like a Philosopher, and *Seneca* like a Man condemned to be executed.

We see People every day that are condemn'd to die, who, when they are brought upon a Scaffold, make tedious Speeches, with a long Bead-roll of moral Sentences. This is a Thing very common in *England*, where there are few Malefactors hang'd but what make some sort of Harangue or other to the Populace. But where do we find Genius's that are so happy as to be able, in their last Moments, to vanquish Prejudices, and like *Osman* to preserve that Equanimity?

I own to thee, dear *Monucca*, that as much a Philosopher as I am, I should not be willing to die out of the Pale of *Judaism*. I am of Opinion that I should not be able to resist the first Notions which I received in my Infancy, and have cultivated ever since. I know that *Osman* is no Bigot to the *Nazarene* Religion, which is what he was reproach'd with when he profess'd that Law; and certainly he is no greater a Devotee to *Mahometism*. But, in fine,

being thus uncertain what Religion to chuse, if he does but think he ought to be of some Religion or other, is it not probable that he must incline in his Heart to the *Nazarene*. Some Persons indeed, who have frequently convers'd with him, have assur'd me that he has a Byass towards *Judaism*. If this be true, I no longer wonder at his Serenity of Mind. I even fancy I have a glimpse that he is inclin'd to this Opinion ; and I guess'd as much from the Letters he wrote to his Countess, and to his Friend, of which there are Copies handed about at *Constantinople*. I send thee Extracts of 'em.

LETTER from the *Count de Bonneval*, to
his *Lady*.

PERMIT me, Madam, to employ the few Moments I have to live, in telling you how sensible I am of the Sorrow and Trouble which you may suffer for my having chang'd my Religion. I know that among the great People what I have done is ascrib'd to my resolute Temper ; but those of a low Genius, the Vulgar, in short a vast number of private Men have not Discernment enough to unveil the Mysteries which are eternally conceal'd from them ; and you are the Sufferer for a Crime of which I was the Author. I turn'd *Turk* out of meer Revenge, and 'tis this same Passion that retains me in this Party, and makes me persevere in it to Death. Nevertheless what ever be my Doom I don't think that I run more Danger here than in the midst of *Paris*. There are many People here who pity those that die in *France*, and where you are they pity such as lose their Lives at *Constantinople*. Both the one and the other pretend to be in the Right. 'Till
I am,

‘ I am let into the Truth of this, I hope from Heaven and its Mercy, that he will crown us Both, you with Happiness in this World, and me in the next.’

LETTER from the Count de Bonneval to
the Duke de ——.

‘ I Am going soon to undertake a long Journey, my dear Duke, and have already greas’d my Boots. My Heirs will be excus’d from making Presents to Hospitals, and from giving to Parsons, Fryars and Church-wardens. My Iman will conduct me into my Vault without any Formality, and will assure all *Asia* that I am with *Mahomet* in the Mansion of the Blessed. He will give a pompous Description of the Celestial Seraglio, and of the Wives that the good Angels will have prepar’d for me. He will declare that they are still Virgins, and that I enjoy exquisite Pleasures in their Company, whilst in *France* and *Germany* the Monks will roar against my Change till they foam at the Mouth. One will tell the Number of the Lashes which *Astaroth* gave me at my Entrance into the infernal Dungeon. Another will tell of the Fire-brands which *Belzebub* has made red-hot to broil me upon, and the several Chaldrons of boiling Oil in which I have been souz’d. By a strange Turn of the Human Mind, I shall be pronounced happy after Death on this side the *Danube*, and unhappy on the other. Do you, my dear Duke, whose Tranquility I know concerning my Destiny, who are astonish’d at the immense Power of God, and acknowledgest his Goodness, do thou preserve the Memory of a Friend, who notwithstanding his Misfortunes deserves your Esteem, and even the Admiration of his Enemies?’

A *Jew*, my dear *Monceca*, who should die in the Bosom of *Israel*, would not write in other Language than this. Tho' the Basha does not declare himself openly, 'tis easy to perceive his Opinion. If at the same time he was really a *Jew*, it were an unpardonable Weakness in him not to have made an authentic Confession of it. Besides our pure Law does not allow of such Disguises. If the Basha be a *Jew*, he must surely be of the Sect establish'd at *Paris* *, of which thou didst make mention to me in thy fourth Letter, which does not practise Circumcision, and is even ignorant of its being in the *Jewish* Faith. The Basha, as well as those at *Paris*, has no external Worship, and observes no Ceremony.

Nevertheless, dear *Monceca*, it cannot be in the Nature of Things, but God has commanded Mankind some sort of Worship, and since he has created Man to serve him, undoubtedly he has prescribed him the Rules and the Manner how he would be worshipped. What horrid Confusion would be the Consequence if every one had a different manner of Thinking concerning the Worship due to the Deity? The Mind of Man, subject to err, would soon relapse into the Errors of Idolatry. We should even see him with the Censer in his Hand offering his Homage to the vilest of Animals, deifying Onions, and cultivating a thousand Deities every Day in his Kitchen-Garden.

Since I wrote my Letter, I am assur'd that the Basha has perfectly recover'd his Health. Fare thee well, dear *Monceca*, and prosper more and more.

* The Deists.



LETTER XXXI.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS,
a Rabbi, at Constantinople.

Paris—

I Have shewn the Letter I received from thee concerning *Osman Basha's* Sickness to some of my learned Acquaintance ; and they say, 'tis the very Picture of the Man. Some blam'd his furious Zeal to destroy a Religion in which he was born, and tax'd him with being a dishonest Man, and they say that his Conduct has quite ruin'd his Character. Others alledge the contrary, and maintain that tho' his Change of his Religion, which was only owing to a Political View, be an unpardonable Sin in the sight of God, yet it did not affect his Character as a Gentleman. The Dispute was manag'd with Warmth on both sides, and, as 'tis generally the Case, after a good deal of Altercation, each continu'd in possession of his own Opinion. As for my own part, dear *Isaac*, I declare to thee, that upon an Examination of the Point in question I should think I could easily decide it.

'Tis certain that a Man cannot be honest without the Belief of a Deity, and this Deity has established a Worship to be paid to him ; therefore as a necessary Consequence of the Belief of the Deity, the Believer must be attach'd to the Worship instituted by that Divine Being ; and a Man cannot

quit that in which he was born to change it for another, unless he thinks it better.

Dissimulation is condemn'd by Mankind as a Crime, and is not a feign'd Belief of a Thing which a Man ridicules in his Mind, a continual Dissimulation? I should not so much blame an Atheist, if 'tis true that there can be such a one, as a Man who believes the Godhead, and at the same time honours him in a way that he knows must offend him. The latter affronts a Being of whose Majesty and Power he does not want to be convinc'd. The former is guilty of no other Crime than continuing in his Blindness. A King of *France* wou'd undoubtedly sooner pardon an ignorant *Ethiopian* who should say there never was such a Person, than a *Spaniard* who should come to insult him with offensive Language. Moreover, I am sure that there is no Atheist truly convinc'd of his Opinion, nor can I think any better of those who have pass'd in the World for the Champions of Atheism. The more Sense they were endow'd with, the more Arguments they sought for to prove their System, the better could they discern the Falshood of it, because they could not be a Moment without reflecting how impossible it was for Matter to rise to Perfection high enough for producing such spiritual Ideas as they entertain'd.

Is any thing so ridiculous, any thing so absurd, as to imagine that Confusion and Disorder could produce the Regularity of the Universe; that a Mass of Atoms jostling one another, could form such Thinking Matter as to foresee Futurity, to discern the Course of the Stars, to measure the vast Expanse of the Heavens, to communicate its Thoughts, Sentiments, and all its internal Motions to another Thinking Matter of the same Make? In fact, can a Man reflect maturely on a Subject which pleads

pleads so strongly in favour of the Divinity, and be really persuaded that there is no such Being? No, my dear *Isaac*, I shall always believe the contrary. Let an *Epicurean* be ever so fondly conceited of the Mixture of Atoms, and their fortuitous Concourse, yet in the Depth of his Meditations the Lamp of Truth will glare in his Eyes: And if he shuts them because he would not be inlighen'd, yet he still perceives the Glimmering, and that's enough to form his Doubts.

I own to thee, that if I was this Moment an *Epicurean*, I cou'd not help reflecting how impossible it is that a hundred Millions of Particles or Atoms jumbled together by Chance could produce this Letter that I am now writing. *What*, should I say, *can a second Principle drawn consequentially from the first, a Justness in Argument, clear and distinct Ideas be form'd by Caprice, supported by Caprice, and continu'd by Caprice?* Is the placing of Things in the most regular Order, and is the Continuation of that Regularity establish'd on nothing but Confusion and Chance*? Is it not after all something Divine,

* Nam simul ac Ratio tua cœpit vociferari
Naturam Rerum haud divina Mente co-ortam,
Diffugient Animi Terrores, Mænia Mundi
Discedunt, totum video per inane geri Res.
— Nusquam apparent Acherusia Templa.
Lucret. de Rerum Nat. lib. iii. v. 14, &c.

The Speech which Lucretius here makes for Epicurus, is thus translated by Mr. Creech.

- “ For when I hear thy mighty Reason prove
- “ This World was made without the Pow'rs ABOVE,
- “ All Fears and Terrors waste and fly apace;
- “ Through parted Heav'ns I see the MIGHTY SPACE,
- “ — No Hell, no sulph'rous Lakes, no Pools, appear.

which deserves the highest Honours and Sacrifices for having so well sustain'd the Character of infinite Wisdom and Foresight in forming and preserving the World.

If I believed the Epicurean System, every Day that I observed the Course of the Sun making its Appearance on our Horizon, and advancing with large Strides towards the Antipodes, I should be apt to cry out, *Hail eternal Chance! Incomprehensible Irregularity, admirable Confusion, which maintain Order and Regularity, which preserve and perpetuate that divine and surprizing Harmony which we see and feel in all the Parts of the Universe!* Permit me to pay thee the Honours which other blind Mortals give to a God who is all Goodness, all Power, and all Wisdom.

Do'st thou believe, dear Isaac, that there are any Epicureans, who after a Survey of Nature, don't own, in spite of their Prejudice, that there is a first Principle which preserves and maintains the Regularity and Order that prevail in the Universe? For be their Obstinacy what it will, depend upon it, that they are not so certain as they pretend to be, that 'tis possible for the Maintenance and Preservation of Perspicuity and Understanding, to spring from a Principle of Blindness and Ignorance.

They who deny the Being of a God may be ranged into two different Classes. The first consists of a Number of Philosophers who have bewilder'd themselves in their Arguments. Being weary of a fruitless Search into the incomprehensible Immensity of the Divine Nature, and shock'd by certain Difficulties of which they could never find the Solution, they thought they were in the right to deny the Existence of a God, because they could not fathom his immense Profundity; as if our Ignorance of the Operations of a Being was a Reason for denying his Existence. We every Day see the Effects

and

and Productions of Nature, of which we don't know the Causes. We don't know how the Corn grows in the Field; but shall it therefore be deny'd that Corn actually does grow? The Operations of the Power of a God appear as plain to our Eyes as the Ears of Corn that sprout out of the Ground. We cannot fully know his Greatness, his Power, his Essence; I allow it. But do we discover the Secret of Germination?

The second Class of Atheists is the most numerous. This includes that Medley of Libertines and Rakes, whose Debauchery, instead of Study and Meditation, determines their Faith. Yet of these there are few, but, for all their Extravagances, have in spite of themselves some Calls to incline to the Truth; and to avoid their Remorse of Conscience, they must resolve to make no more use of their Eyes. For as soon as they open them, every thing convinces them of the Glory of the Almighty Being. If they turn them towards the Heavens, they there cannot help contemplating his Greatness. If they fix them on the Earth, they there discover his Wisdom and his Power. As they have not the Helps which Philosophers have recourse to, and as they cannot like them stifle their Reason by vain Arguments, they are perpetually the Dupes of their own Doubts. Fear, Remorse, and the Troubles in which their Uncertainty involves them, take a continual Revenge for the Affront put upon the Deity in their Hearts.

Among the Common People there are few that are tinctur'd with Atheism, this being a Crime more general among those of high Rank. The first Princes of the World were the first Enemies of the Divinity, and their Blindness was owing to their Power and their Greatness. *Ninus King of the Assyrians* boasted that he had never seen the Stars

nor

nor desir'd to see them, and that he despis'd the Sun, the Moon and all the other Deities. And *Sardanapalus*, one of *Ninus's* Successors, being forc'd to put himself to death rather than he would fall into the Hands of his Enemies, caus'd this Inscription to be written upon his Monument :

‘ *Sardanapalus* liv'd a great many Years in a little time, having refus'd nothing to his Pleasures. He built two Cities in a Day, *Anchiale* and *Tarsus*. He did a Work of several Years in 24 Hours. Reader, follow his Example, eat, drink and enjoy thy self: For after Death there is neither Pleasure nor Sorrow.’

Ninus and *Sardanapalus* were quiet and harmless Atheists.. Tho' they denied the Deity, they did not despise him; but several others have push'd their Error farther. *Diagoras* the Sophist set fire to a *Hercules* of Wood to make his Pot boil, saying at the same time to it, *Courage Hercules, after thy twelve Labours for the Service of Euristheus, there must be a thirteenth for me.* One of the *Dionysius's*, Kings of *Sicily*, stript the Statue of *Jupiter Olympius* of its golden Robe, and gave it one of Wool; in excuse of which Sacrilege he said, that *Exchange was no Robbery; and that it was necessary to take care of the God's Health, and to cloath him suitably both Summer and Winter.* The same *Dionysius* set a Barber to the Statue of *Æsculapius*, who shav'd his golden Beard, pretending that as *Apollo* his Father had no Beard, it was not fit that his Son should have any. This Story puts me in mind of another which happened in our Time; and which I have from the Chevalier *de Maisin*.

In *France* there's an illustrious Family that goes by the Name of *Levi*, which pretends to be descended from the Tribe of *Israel* of that Name. The Marquis *de Levi*, Captain of a Man of War, arrived

arrived in the late Wars at a little Town in *Spain*, which favour'd the Enemy's Party, where he landed some Soldiers, and forc'd the Town to pay Contribution. As he was going on board again, a Soldier told him, that he saw an Image of Silver in the Church which was four or five Feet high. The Marquis being tempted to make himself Master of such a rich Piece of Treasure, went to Church, desir'd to see the Statue, and ask'd whose it was: Being answer'd, that 'twas St. *Magdalen's* a Jewess by Birth, in the Infancy of Christianity; Gentlemen, said the Marquis to the Priests, *I am, charm'd to hear of my Cousin. I am, just as you see me, of the Jewish Race, and very near a-kin to the Saintess whose Image you have here. I hope therefore you won't take it ill if I carry this Image to France, where I will have a Temple built for it that shall be fit to receive it.* At these Words he seiz'd his dear Cousin, and sent her aboard his Ship. But when he came to *France* he had Orders from his Court, which had been inform'd of his Behaviour, to send back his Cousin to *Spain* at his own Cost and Charge; and if it had not been for some Friends of his, he would have been intirely ruin'd.

Tho' the Action of this *French* Officer was no Affront to the Deity, yet 'twas very criminal, because he fail'd in an essential Point of his Religion, by violating the Respect it oblig'd him to have for their Saints. They who are born in any particular Religion, and who at the same time that they believe it to be the true Religion, break certain Principles of it, and play fast and loose with their Faith make large Strides to that unhappy Stupidity which leads to Atheism. A Man has no Right to find fault with a Principle, and to act in Consequence, farther than he thinks it is false.

Fare thee well, dear *Isaac*, and prosper in all thy Affairs.



LETTER XXXII.

AARON MONCECA to JACOB BRITO.

Paris —————

TWO Days ago I was at the House of a *Venetian Jew* lately arriv'd in this City, where he is already very famous. He sells Phosphorus's and Essences which he distils for different Causes. He has some to whiten the Skin, and others to smooth it. He has divers Machines for Philosophical Experiments, which are very curious. But the Notion which People have entertain'd of him is what brings all the World to his House and excites most Curiosity. They take him to be a great Cabalist; and 'tis given out all over *Paris*, that he is thorow Master of that Science. My Curiosity and Impatience to know the Truth of a Thing which I always doubted of, was the Occasion of the Acquaintance I have made with him. I ask'd him whether it was true that he knew the Art of foreseeing Futurity, and whether he had the Power of commanding the Spirits? He frankly own'd to me that all his Knowledge consisted in his Chymical Experiments. *I have*, said he to me, *heard talk of Cabalists ever since I was born, and after all the Search I have made I could never find one. I have discours'd a great many People who were thought by*

by the Public to excel in that Science ; and they all told me they were not sorry that they were thought to be possess'd of that Talent, because of the Interest and Advantage which they reap'd from it ; but that to speak the Truth, all their Knowledge amounted like mine, to no more than some Chymical Compositions, whose Effects were known to few People.

I have taken as much Pains, my dear Brito, to inform myself of the Truth of the Cabalistic Science as this *Venetian Jew*, but have found no more Reality than he in all the Stories that are so confidently told of it. Sound Philosophy had already convinc'd me, that the Science of Reading in the Book of Futurity was reserv'd to God alone ; nor had I any Notion of the pretended Power assign'd to the Cabalists over certain Genii, always ready to obey them.

I have examin'd what Grounds there were for the Cabalists to ascribe that Power to themselves over the Spirits : I have found their Arguments so weak and pitiful that I have plac'd their Art in the Rank of Judicial Astrology. Can any thing be more ridiculous than to pretend, that by the ranging of certain Letters, and by the Pronunciation of some Words, 'tis possible to give a new Face to Human Things, to stop the Course of 'em, and to assume a Power equal to that of the Author of Nature ?

In all Religions there's a number of People who are fond of the Reputation of having a Correspondence with the Spirits ; and several pretend to the Prerogative and Power of banishing them from Places of their Residence. The *Nazarenes* are all persuaded of the Power of the Genii ; the Priests of that Religion pretend to a despotic Power over the Demons. They say they know them all by their Names and Surnames, and that

that they know when and upon what Occasion they have a Right to possess the House, and sometimes the Body of a private Person. The Vulgar, and those of weak Minds give into all these wild Notions ; and by being so often dinn'd with Stories of being possessed and beset, several really think they are actually possessed, and can never get the foolish Notion of it out of their Heads.

All the religious Tracts among the *Nazarenes* seem to be the Continuation of *Amadis*, wherein you see nothing but Witches, Conjurers, Demons and Devilism. In the Opinion of one of their own Pontiffs *, the Lives of their Saints are not written with so much Dignity as that of the antient Pagan Philosophers by *Diogenes Laertius*. What, in short, can a Man of good Sense say, when he reads the foolish Pranks play'd by a Devil; to tempt a Hermit in the Desart † ? What can he think when he reads in another Place of a Monk's amusing himself with burning the Devil's Claws with a Flambeau ‡ ? And how ridiculous must he think a great many other Books which are an odd Collection of all the Follies and Extravagances that the distracted Imagination of Man can produce || ?

These pernicious Tales are approv'd of by the *Nazarene* Priests, and of most of them they are even the Inventors. The Reputation they have of dispossessing those pretended Demons is what tickles their Vanity. They compose a Water for their Exor-

* Cardinal *Bessarion*.

† The Temptation of St. *Anthony*.

‡ The Life of St. *Dominic*.

|| Exorcism of The Nuns of *Louviers*, the History of *Magdalen de la Palu*, &c.

cisms, in which they infuse a little Salt *. And after several Grimaces and Contorsions which they make over the Vessel that contains that miraculous Liquor, they sing some Tunes, and pronounce certain Words which complete the Virtue of the Charm. They afterwards save this Water to drive out all evil Spirits, and pretend that the Devils are obliged to turn out as soon as the Body is sprinkled with it.

When a Man is seiz'd with a diabolical Frenzy; and struck with so pernicious a Delusion, the Priests cure one Lye with another. The same Prejudice which causes the Delusion of the Wretches who think themselves possessed, persuades them that the Remedy which is given them is infallible; and their Disorder is at an end as soon as the Imagination is calm'd, after the Distraction into which Fear had plung'd it. Consequently they are perpetually bubbled by their Prejudices, of which their Repose and Tranquility are a necessary Consequence.

Tho' the Blindness of the common People in so greedily receiving the Impression of such Chimæras, is so astonishing, yet the Wonder is the less when it is considered, that these Errors are consecrated by their Faith and their Religion. The *Nazarene* Temples are full of Monuments, which transmit the History of these Sorceries from Age to Age.

In a City not far from *Paris* †, there's a miraculous Candle, surnam'd the *everlasting Taper*, which is shewn upon a certain Day to the People, and as they pretend never goes out, nor wastes. 'Tis inclos'd in a long Candlestick, above which it rises not more than an Inch, in such manner, that 'tis

* Holy Water.

† Amiens.

always

always in their Power to raise it to the same Height, when 'tis burnt to the Edge of the Candlestick, or put another in its place when 'tis consum'd. Tho' this Mummery is so visible, it would be dangerous to speak of it in public, before People who are perswaded of the Truth of this Miracle, and who would be sure to despise, if not to hate you; for a *Nazarene* who would pardon a sensible Affront, wou'd never forgive a Banter on the Reality of the Miracle of the Holy Candle.

The Story which is told of this miraculous Taper, is founded on the pretended Deliverance of a *Nazarene* who had given himself to the Devil. This Man, whose Name was *Christopher*, weary of taking great Pains for very little Money, and of being always a Slave, resolv'd to be more at his Ease in this World, tho' he was not so happy in the next. He heard his Pastor speak every Day of the great Power of the Devil, and of the Numbers of People that gave themselves to him. This Priest made himself hoarse by talking of all the wicked Spirits which to his Knowledge had gratify'd the criminal Desire of private Men. His Discourses convinc'd the lazy *Christopher*, who with the Help of the Devil was resolv'd to have Money, and to take less Care and Pains than he had done to get it. He called therefore several times to the Devil; but whether his Devilship had other Busines at that time upon his Hands, or whether he foresaw what would happen to him, he made no great Haste to come at *Christopher's* Call; till being quite tir'd out with the impatient *Nazarene's* Importunity, he came one Day to the House, and appear'd to him in the Shape of a pretty little Monkey. *What is it thou do'st want with we?* said he; *thou hast been calling a long Time.* *Speak, what can I do for thy Service?* *My Lord,* reply'd *Christopher*, *they say that*

your

your Lordship gives Estates and Wealth to whomsoever you please. I should be oblig'd to you if you would grant me some Share in your Favour. But what hast thou to give me? said the Devil. Alas! my Lord, reply'd Christopher, I have nothing for myself; I am but a poor Carpenter that live by my Calling. I will, says Belzebub, give thee for thirty Years as much Gold as thou canst wish: But after that Time is expired, I shall want a Carpenter in the infernal Mansions, for some Repairs which I foresee will be necessary in my Palace; and therefore, when that Time is out, I shall come to fetch thee. Christopher and the Devil mutually sign'd their Contract; which done, the Monkey-Belzebub gave a Spring, and made his Exit up the Chimney. The Nazarene wish'd for 6000 Pistoles, and presently he found that Sum in his Pockets; upon which he quitted his Plane and his Chisel, and buys a House. The 6000 Pistoles being spent, he demands 6000 more, and obtains them; which Sum he lays out in Furniture and Plate. As soon as this Sum was spent he wish'd for another, and no sooner ask'd but had it; so that never was there a Devil more punctual; and Christopher was so taken with his Honesty, that he did not like to hear him tax'd with the Want of it.

Fifteen Years of the Lease were expir'd, when one Night as the Nazarene was entertaining some of his Friends at Supper (for after he had acquir'd a Fortune he did not want Friends) he ordered his Maid to go into the Cellar for a particular sort of Wine which he reserv'd for special Regales. Down went Jenny as soon as she was bid; but how great was her Surprize when she saw upon one of the Barrels a lusty Man dress'd in Black, who bid her go up and tell her Master that he must needs speak with him, and that without Delay, or he must expect

pect to have his Neck twisted before all his Guests. The Maid, very much aghast, call'd *Christopher* aside, and told him the Message. By the Description she gave him, he mistrusted that this great black Man was the Devil; and having provided himself with his Contract, he took it down with him into the Cellar, to shew him that his Lease was but half expired. *Well,* says the Apparition to him as soon as he was enter'd the Cellar, *I come to tell thee thou hast but an Hour to live.* *My Lord,* reply'd *Christopher,* *your Lordship is mistaken by fifteen Years;* here's my Contract. *How long did I promise you Life?* said *Belzebub.* *Thirty Years,* reply'd *Christopher.* *Very well,* reply'd the Devil; *pray don't fifteen Years of Days, and fifteen Years of Nights make up the Account?* That's our way of Computation, and we shan't go to alter the Method of calculating the infernal Years to please you.

Christopher, very much astonished, went up into the Hall to his Friends, who seeing him so melancholy and dejected, ask'd him the Reason of it, and he told them his unhappy Case. *Be of good Courage,* said a Norman Priest to him, who happen'd to be one of the Guests, *go down into the Cellar, and only tell the Devil to prolong your Life while this Candle burns.* *Christopher* went and carried his Petition to the Devil, who to convince him that he was a good-natur'd Devil in the main, tho' he calculated the Years otherwise than this World does, granted him his Request. The Nazarene carried the Candle back to the Priest, who without Loss of Time dipp'd it in Holy Water, that the Devil might not have Power over it to seize and put it out. This Stratagem which *Belzebub* was not aware of, render'd all his Tricks of no Avail. He made his way back to the infernal Territories by a deep Hole he open'd in the Ground, of which none could ever yet found

found the Bottom. The *Nazarene* did Penance a long while for this Crime. The Consecrated Candle was again put into the Hands of the Fryars, and it has brought them in more Money than *Christopher* got from the Devil of a Monkey.

Do but consider the Credulity of these People, and judge whether the Extravagances into which their Weakness involves them, are to be ascribed to any thing but their own Ignorance, or to the Frauds of those who deceive and abuse them.

Fare thee well, and if thou can't, give me some entertaining Novels from *Genoa*.



L E T T E R XXXIII.

A A R O N M O N C E C A to I S A A C O N I S,
a Rabbi, at Constantinople.

Paris —

THE Acquaintance I have made with some Men of Learning in this Country, has entirely turn'd my Mind to Philosophy. I am astonish'd when I consider what a prodigious Difference there is between one Man and another. I consider the Genius, the Science, the Penetration of *Descartes*, and then I cast my Eyes upon a Peasant who never quitted the Fields and the Country, and who being always at his Day-labour, minds nothing but digging the Ground, and Eating and Drinking. I think then there's more Difference between his Soul and that of a Philosopher, than there is betwixt his Soul and that of a Dog. What does this Peasant that is
not

not common to the meanest Animal? The latter has Passions, is sensible of Friendship and Gratitude, and distinguishes Good from Evil according to the Notions put into his Head. A Dog well train'd up, and carefully look'd after, loves his Master, follows him, and defends him. Some of those Animals have been seen to die with Sorrow and Grief. These therefore are Passions common as well to the Dog as the Peasant. Let us examine if he does not distinguish Good from Evil. He will not void his Excrements in a certain Chamber; he will take no Meat which he finds laid up in a certain Place, because he was beat when he went to do it, and was by that means fill'd with a Prejudice or Prepossession that he did an ill Thing to meddle with Meat in that Place *. But I will go farther

* Postremò, quid in hâc mirabile tantopere est re,
 Si genus humanum, cui vox, & lingua vigeret,
 Pro vario sensu varias res voce notarit,
 Cùm pecudes mutæ, cum denique fæcla ferarum
 Dissimileis soleant voces variisque ciere,
 Cùm metus, aut dolor est, & cùm jam gaudia gliscunt?
 Quippe etenim id licet è rebus cognoscere apertis.

Irritata Canum cum primùm magna Molossum,
 Mollia Ricta premunt duros nudantia Denteis,
 Longè alio sonitu rabie districta minantur:
 Et cùm jam latrant, & vocibus omnia complent.
 At catulos blandè cum linguâ lambere tentant,
 Aut ubi eos lactant pedibus, morsuque potentes,
 Suspensis teneros imitantur dentibus haustus,
 Longè alio pacto gannitu vocis adulant:
 Et cum deserti baubantur in ædibus, aut cùm
 Plorantes fugiunt sammisso corpore plagas.

Lucret. de Rerum Nat. lib. v. ver. 1058.

Which

farther, and maintain that this Behaviour of the Dog is an evident Proof that his Mind is capable of the three Operations of Logic, and I don't see why a Shock Dog and a Mastiff may not carry his Reasoning as far as a Regent of Philosophy in the College of the four Nations.

The first Operation of the Mind of Man is to conceive, the second to range his Thoughts together, and the third is from thence to draw a just Consequence. Now I plainly distinguish these three different Operations in the Dog. When I have a mind to teach him to leap over a Stick ; when he Jeaps I coax him ; that's the first Thought. — I beat him when he does not leap ; that is the second Thought. He leaps again ; and that's the Consequence of the two first Thoughts. I sum up the Dog's Reasoning with himself thus : If I leap I am stroak'd ; if I do not leap I am beat ; therefore I'll leap.

Which is thus translated by Mr. Creech.

- What Wonder is it, then, that Man should frame,
- And give each *diff'rent Thing* a *diff'rent Name*,
- Since **B E A S T S** themselves do make a different Noise,
- Oppress'd by Pains and Fears, or fill'd with Joys ?
- This plain Examples shew : When **D o g s** begin {
- To bend their Backs, and shew their Teeth, and grin,
- When hollow Murmurs shew deep Rage within ;
- Their **V o i c e** is different when they bark aloud,
- And with strong Roarings fright the trembling Croud :
- Or when they lick their **W h e l p s** with tender Tongue,
- Or when they play, and wanton with their Young ;
- Now seem to bite but never chop their Jaws,
- Now spurning, but with tender fearful Claws ;
- Then flatt 'ring soft and tender is their *Voice*,
- Far diff'rent from that grating, howling Noise
- They make, when shut alone, or creeping low,
- Whine, as they strive to shun the coming Blow.

There are a thousand Passages in History which manifest the Understanding and Reasoning of Beasts. That excellent French Author *Montaigne* mentions certain Oxen that seem'd to have understood Arithmetic. They were used to turn the Winder of a Well a hundred times a day; but when they had done their Work, all the Severity they could use to them did not prevail on 'em to take one step more*. These Cattle were Mathematicians without having ever learnt the Elements of *Euclid*. In short, it cannot be deny'd, but they had a Method of Computation which serv'd them as a certain Rule for determining the Number of Rounds they had made.

From an Inquiry into the Sense and Understanding of a Dog, proceed we to that of a Peasant: He follows a daily Custom, as one may say, mechanically; he gets up in the Morning, works in the Field, eats and drinks at certain Hours, goes to Bed at Night, and rises again next day, to do just the same as he did the day before; so that the first Day of his Life and the last are much the same: He knows none of the Secrets of Nature, nor of the secret Springs of the Soul and the Mind, but what he learns from the common Objects that strike his Eye, and if he has Perception above the Instinct

* The Oxen that serv'd in the Royal Gardens of *Suzza* to water them, and to turn certain great Wheels for drawing the Water, to which there were Buckets fasten'd (as is the Custom in *Languedoc*.) These were ordered to go round each a hundred Turns: They were so accustom'd to that Number, that it was not possible by any Force to make them draw one Turn more; and when they had done their Task, they stopped short on a sudden. We arrive to the State of Youth before we know how to count a hundred, and we have been discovering Nations that have no Knowledge of Numbers.

of Beasts, he is scarce a Jot the wiser for it. What an immense Difference is there betwixt the Penetration of *Des Cartes* and the Blindness and Ignorance of the Peasant ! I am astonished when I see this Philosopher measuring the Course of the Stars, finding out the distance of them, and foretelling their Eclipses and Motions even to the remotest Ages. I am yet more surpriz'd when he teaches me to know myself, and when by freeing my Soul from those Bodies that conceal it from my Eyes, he makes its Being visible to me, and proves its Spirituality. His Reasoning and the Justness of his Thoughts are invincible Arguments of it ; I spare the Peasant for the sake of the Philosopher.

The *Nazarene Doctors* have exclaimed against their Opinion, who rank brute Beasts in the Class of meer Machines. They have done ill to oppose a System which was most agreeable to the Spirituality of the Souls of Men. For if it be asserted that Beasts have a material Soul, 'tis allowed that the Power of Moving and the Faculty of Thinking are not incompatible with Matter. Now if Matter is capable of rising to a certain Point of Knowledge and Understanding, by subtilising this Matter farther, it may rise to a higher degree of Perfection : From a Dog it may reach to a Peasant ; from a Peasant to a Philosopher.

There have been great Men who have believed the Soul to be material, tho' immortal : Of this Opinion were several of the antient Philosophers, and this was the Opinion likewise of one of the first and most celebrated of the *Nazarene Doctors**.

Every

* Cum autem sit, (loquitur de Animâ) habeat necesse est aliquid per quod est ; si habet aliquid per quod est, hoc erit Corpus ejus. Omne quod est Corpus est sui Generis

Every Thing that is not Matter, said he, is nothing. But the Soul is something: Therefore it is material. But there is nothing so easy as to prove the Possibility of the Spirituality of our Soul. God is a Spirit: He exists. The Soul may therefore be Spiritual, and exist *.

There have been Philosophers so involv'd in their Error and Blindness, as to assert that God himself was Material, and that the Divinity consisted of a subtile Matter, which constituted the Soul of the Universe, and was diffus'd over all †. This is almost the very System of *Spinoza* and some other *Atheists*, whose Error and Abomination I have shewn thee

Generis; nihil est incorporale, nisi quod non est. *Tertullian de Carne Christi.* cap. xi.

* This Argument did not confound *Tertullian*; for though he believed God to be a Spirit, he understood by a Spirit a corporeal Nature, but extremely delicate. *Who can deny, says he, that God is a Body, tho' God is a Spirit? Every Spirit is a Body, and has a Form which is proper to it.* *Quis enim negabit Dnum esse Corpus, et si Deus Spiritus est? Spiritus etiam Corpus sui Generis, in sua Effigie.* *Tertull. ad-ver. Prax.* cap. vii.

All the antient Philosophers, if we except *Plato*, who nevertheless had mistaken Ideas of the nature of God, thought he was composed of a Matter extremely subtile. This is what they meant by the Word *Spirit*. Several of the Fathers of the Church have fallen into the same Error; of which the Readers may see a Proof in the *Secret Memoirs of the Republic of Letters.* Letter v.

† This was the Opinion of several of the antient Philosophers, particularly of the *Stoicks*. *Virgil* has perfectly described the System of the Soul of the World.

Principio Cœlum, et Terras, Camposque liquentes
Lucentemque Globum Lunæ, Titaniaque Astra,
Spiritus intus alit; totamque infusa per artus
Mens agitat Molem, et Magno se Corpore miscet.
Inde Hominum Pecudumque Genus, Vitæque Volantum,

Et

thee in a former Letter †. Is not a God subject to be divided into a hundred thousand Parts a very venerable Deity ! For every thing that is Matter, is capable of being divided, and if God is Material he is capable of being divided in like manner. *Spinoza* no doubt banter'd the *Nazarenes*, for believing three Persons in one God, and at the same time he by his

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Et quæ marmoreo fert Monstra sub Æquore Pontus.
 Igneus est ollis Vigor, & cœlestis Origo
 Seminibus ; quantum non noxia Corpora tardant,
 Terrenique hebetant Artus moribundaque Membra,
 Hinc metuant, cupiuntque dolent, guadentque neque
 Auras.

Respiciunt clausæ Tenebris & carcere cæco.

Virgil Æneid. lib. vi. v. 721, &c.

i. e. As Mr. Dryden has translated it ;

- Know first that Heaven and Earth's compacted Frame,
- And flowing Waters, and the Starry Flame,
- And both the radiant Lights, *one common Soul*
- *Inspires and feeds, and animates the whole.*
- This active Mind infus'd through all the Space,
- Unites and mingles with the mighty Mass.
- Hence Men and Beasts the Breath of Life obtain ;
- And Birds of Air, and Monsters of the Main.
- Th' Æthereal Vigor is in all the same,
- And every Soul is fill'd with equal Flame,
- As much as Earthly Limbs and gross Allay
- Of mortal Members, subject to decay,
- Blunt not the Beams of Heav'n and Edge of Day,
- From this coarse Mixture of Terrestrial Parts,
- Desire and Fear by turns possess their Hearts,
- And Grief and Joy : Nor can the grov'ling Mind,
- In the dark Dungeon of the Limbs confin'd
- Affert the native Skies, or own its Heavenly kind.

† The XXXIst. *Spinoza* lays it down that All is in God, and that All is God ; which is the very same Doctrine as that of the Soul of the World.

own System believed there were Millions. So ridiculous an Opinion rendered God perpetually contrary to himself; for when a certain Quantity of Matter required a Thing which was incongruous to another, two Gods disputed with one another; so that all Men being themselves Portions of the Divinity, it must be stained with all Crimes, and instead of saying a *Robber* has killed an *Honest Man*; it would be said, *that a Knavish God has kill'd an Honest God.*

Consider, Dear *Isaac*, if there is any thing so ridiculous, as to deny the Spirituality of God. It must either be asserted, that he does not exist, or own'd that he is not material. I have expatiated enough in one of my Letters upon the Necessity of a Being, sovereignly perfect, powerful and intelligent, and upon the chimærical System of Atoms. A Man must have no Notion at all of Things if he can conceive that Chance is capable of producing such Order as prevails in the Universe; and that this same Chance, which is but Confusion, can support it; for according to this Argument, Rule and Harmony are a Consequence of perpetual Disorder and Jumble, and blind Destiny directs and conducts

Ethices Propositio XV de Deo.

Quidquid est in Deo est, & Nihil sine Deo esse, neque concipi, potest.

Demonstratio.

Præter Deum nulla datur, neque concipi potest substantia (per XIV Proposit.) hoc est (per *Defin.*) Res quæ in se est, & per se concipiatur. Modi autem (per *Defin.* V.) sine substantia nec esse, nec concipi possunt, quare hi in sola Divina Natura esse & per ipsam solam concipi possunt. Atqui præter Substantias & Modos, nihil datur (per Axiom I.) Ergo, nihil sine Deo esse, neque concipi potest. *Spinozæ Opera.*

*Posth-Ethices, part. i. page 12.
what*

what is the most surprising Effect of the wise Prudence. If it be therefore clear and manifest that there is a God, and that he is a Spirit, Why may not our Soul be the same? If any thing exists that is more perfect than Matter, as we agree, may not our Souls be of one and the same Quality as that Being of which we can have no perfect Knowledge?

I see no Reason to deny the Spirituality of the Soul, and much less to disbelieve the Immortality of it; for 'tis a necessary Consequence of the Existence of a God. The Almighty Being, when he created Man, gave him the Power of knowing him, which Knowledge I don't think to be an innate Idea, but such as I take to be necessarily attach'd to Reason; being persuaded that there is nobody who contemplates the Order and Regularity of the Universe, but finds within himself that there is something sovereignly Great and sovereignly Just, that governs the World.

Now God having granted to us the necessary Power of knowing him, intended no doubt that we should serve and honour him. Otherwise to what purpose would it have been that we should have such Knowledge? If it be his Pleasure to be serv'd, and if he has enjoin'd it upon us as a Law, 'tis just in him to punish those who violate his Orders, and to reward those who obey them. And for the Distribution of his Rewards and Punishments, it were necessary that we be out of this World, and that the Soul be immortal. It would be in vain to object that God can punish and reward in this World. No doubt he can: But he seldom does. For daily Experience clearly shews us, that great Villains have enjoy'd perfect Happiness to their Death. From this Prosperity of the Wicked, I draw a new Argument for the Immortality of the Soul. God-

would be unjust, which is an Impossibility, if when he has order'd Men to avoid Evil and to do Good, he favour'd those who disobey him, and punish'd those who serve him. He must needs therefore reserve to himself Rewards and Punishments after Death. I know that some ungodly wicked Men have asserted, that there is no Good nor Evil, and that nothing but the Prejudice of Mankind forms the Difference between the one and the other. The brute Beasts are a Shame to those who have been so blind as to maintain so extravagant a Thesis; for they respect those of their own Species. A Dog would not be so audacious as to bite his Master; he looks on him as his Benefactor, and suffers from him what he would not endure from another. He is sensible and knows that Ingratitude is an Evil; while Men affect not to know it. But where is the Man, be he never so wicked, that does not know that he ought not by the Law of Nature to do to others what he would not have them to do to himself? Prejudice apart; there is not a Ruffian, or a Highwayman, be he ever so harden'd, but is sensible of his Guilt. At least it cannot be deny'd, that he knows when he assassinates a Man he would not be willing to be served so himself. There wants nothing more than this Reasoning to distinguish Good and Evil. If therefore they are different, God must judge them differently; and if he does not do it in this World, his Justice is only the more severe in the next.

The greatest part of those who deny the Immortality of the Soul, only maintain this Opinion because they wish it. They fancy to themselves that they can allay the Stings of Conscience with which they are prick'd. But in the Height of their Debaucheries and their Pleasures, the Truth which stares them in the Face, whether they will or no, begins

begins those Punishments to which they are doom'd after Death.

I know nothing so mortifying to Human Vanity as the Idea of Annihilation. It has something in it capable of producing Despair. A Man must have a very despicable Opinion of the Value of the Faculty of conceiving, thinking, and reasoning, to be pleas'd with the Notion of being one Day depriv'd of it.

Fare thee well, my dear *Isaac*, and be very careful to avoid Society with the Ungodly and with Libertines, for fear lest the Justice of Heaven should involve thee in their Punishment.



LETTER XXXIV.

JACOB BRITO to AARON MONCECA,

Genoa ——

G Allantry prevails at *Genoa* as much or more than in any Town of *Italy*. Love seems to have chose this City for its Residence. The *Italians* who are every where else severe and jealous, are here the very Patterns of debonnair Husbands; and all the Ladies have their *Sigisbies*; which is a Name they give here to the Husband's entire Friend, who passes with the Public for the Wife's Gallant. This Custom is look'd upon only as Merriment, and the Husbands depend on the Fidelity of the *Sigisbies*, even more than on that of their Wives. The Friendship by which they are united seems to them an infallible Curb to check the Violence of the Flames with which they might burn. A Man must

be very foolish, or very weak, to fancy that Friendship can be a sure Means to conquer Love. This may be the Case sometimes: But in the ordinary course of things, nothing can stop the Torrent of this Passion, nor can Honour, or even Virtue itself, stand against it.

We have in all Ages seen the greatest Men guilty of the greatest Follies; *Mark Anthony* idoliz'd *Cleopatra*; for her Sake he lost both his Empire and his Life: And what was the most astonishing of all, He to whom *Julius Cæsar* was oblig'd for the Conquest of the World, fled at the Battle of *Actium*.

Without going so far back for Instances of the surprizing Follies of Great Men, our Age is the Witness of that strange Union which formed one of the greatest Monarchs that the World ever saw preside over Mortals *. This prodigious Genius, capable of putting the greatest and most difficult Projects in execution; this new Legislator of his Dominions; this Guardian Deity of an humbled King †; this Conqueror of another *Alexander* ‡, yielded to the Charms of the Wife of a common Soldier, and promoted her to the Rank of an Empress.

Love is capable of surmounting all Obstacles; and there are few Hearts in which it does not excite the other Passions where once it has got the Mastery. I will confess that it does not debauch Virtue directly, but it disguises it so well that it renders it almost useless. The natural Equity, which every one pretends to follow, is written in no other Books but our Hearts. We only discover it thro' the Veil of our Passions; and this Equity assumes whatever Form they give it. We

* Peter I. Czar of Muscovy. † Augustus King of Poland. ‡ Charles XII. King of Sweden.

often

often mistake Vice for Virtue, and we use the Names of Generosity, Pity and Tenderness, to give a Sanction to our Follies. A Man whom Love forces to betray his Friend, thinks he can justify his Conduct by pleading, in excuse for his Treachery, an unknown Power, an Inclination of which he has not the Controul ; and when, by little and little, he is plung'd into the Depth of Guilt, he thinks he is not far from the Track of Virtue.

Friendship wou'd be no Security to me against Love. If I were a *Genoese*, I shou'd not much care whether my Wife had a *Sigisbeus*, or a titular Lover, who, under the Pretence of an establish'd and insignificant Custom, may when he pleases deceive me, and render my Precautions fruitless. Tho' born in the *Levant*, I am not of a jealous Temper. My Opinion as to the *Sigisbies*, is the Opinion of a reasonable Man. We ought not, like the *Mahometans* and the *Italians*, to torment ourselves with the Suspicion of our Wives Dishonesty ; nor ought we to give Occasion for it, as some of the *Genoese*, and the *French* in general. 'Tis ridiculous to go to expose Women to dangerous Trials, and to expect that they shou'd escape without yielding. 'Tis the same thing as to put a Person into a slippery Path, and then to demand that he never make a false Step.

This Liberty which the Women have at *Genoa*, renders Society amiable and charming. There is not a City in *Italy* where a Traveller and a Foreigner may pass their Time more agreeably. The *Genoese* are very polite, and receive Persons that are recommended to them with very great Respect. *Moses Caro* gave me a Letter for the Senator *Doria*, who has the Title of Prince. He gave me a very civil Reception. Nevertheless, with all his Politeness, I discover'd an Air of Grandeur and

Vanity inseparable from the Great. 'Tis a common Saying in *Italy*, that there are three sorts of Animals insupportable by reason of their Arrogance, viz. Cardinals, Dukes, and the *Genoese* Senators. This Prince *Doria*, to whom I went to pay my Duty, is of a Family as proud as noble: His Father, a Man of a ridiculous Vanity, affected to have great Horses, tall Domestics, large Apartments, &c. His Table was served with huge Dishes, great Plates, &c. He chose a Wife that was extremely tall, and refused one that was much richer because she was shorter. When any one spoke to him, he raised himself imperceptibly, and by little and little exalted himself upon his Toes, that he might appear the taller.

This I own to be, in my Opinion, a very ridiculous Grandeur. How contemptibly does a Philosopher think of a Man who makes his Merit to consist in the Tallness of his Horses and the Stature of his Domestics? And yet this is what the great Men do in part found their Glory upon! Their very Hearts and Souls centre in their Riches! Do but strip a certain Lord of the stately Rayment that covers him; put him in a Condition never more to talk of his Equipage, of Hunting-Matches, of midnight Suppers, and you will see nothing more than an ungainly clumsy Creature, whose ill Shape the Taylor had taken care to conceal under a Load of Lace, and whose Countenance and Phisiognomy the Peruke-Maker had mended, by concealing half of his Face. His Conversation will be low; he will scarce have the Power of explaining what he means; and his Valet de Chambre, in comparison with him, will appear to be a *Demosthenes*.

If great Noblemen knew to what Ridicule their misplaced Vanity exposes them, they would perhaps take another Method to gain the Esteem of the Public,

Public. If they only affect stately Airs to gain the Respect of the World, I pity them for having chose the Means which do but remove them the farther from their Mark. Merit, Valour, and Pro-bity are the Virtues that captivate the Heart. But Pride, Austerity, Contempt, Insolence, are sure to be requited with the Hatred and Indignation of the Public. Constraint hinders it indeed from breaking out, because the Rank which they, who are thus hated and despised, bear in the World, forces to Silence; but this Constraint increases the Disgust of the Public to be forc'd to bear those Affronts.

Men have a Byass within themselves which inclines them to an Equality: 'Tis mortifying to them to see any that are infinitely more happy than they are; and such too very often, who, without any Merit, enjoy all the Gifts and Honours of Fortune. This Envy, with which the common People hate those who possess eminent Posts, can only be conquer'd by a Virtue which puts it to silence, and forces it to confess that Merit is join'd to Greatness, and that the latter is but the just Reward of the former.

I told thee in my last Letter what little Concern most of the *Genoese* have for the true Glory and Happiness of their Country; consequently this Republic has been ever declining for near 300 Years. The Avarice of the Men in Offices, and the Misunderstanding that has prevail'd among them, have been the Occasion of the Losses which this State has sustain'd. The City of *Savona*, which is but eight Leagues from *Genoa*, have rebelled several times on account of the Oppressions it suffer'd, it was once debated in the Senate, whether it were not better intrely to destroy it. *Gentlemen,* says a Senator of the *Doria* Family, *I desire you on-*

ly. to send to Savona such another Governor as the two last were; for if you intend to ruin that City intirely, you cannot make use of a better Expedient. A Touch of Irony so judicious as this, made the Senate reflect on their Error; they call'd the two last Governors to an Account, and punished them for their Misdemeanors. If the same Regard had been shewn to the Island of *Corsica*, of whose Revolt I formerly gave thee an Account, that Kingdom would still have remain'd in the Obedience which it ow'd to its Sovereigns. At the beginning of the *Corsicans* Rebellion the *Genoese* thought they cou'd easily suppress it; but after having employ'd all their Force in humbling them, they had recourse to the Emperor, and desired him to furnish them with an Army. I must here tell thee a Story which is *a propos* to this Subject.

A Gardener complain'd to the Lord of his Man-
nor of a Hare that came every Day into his Garden
to eat Cabbages. The Lord being determin'd to
drive the Creature out, comes to the Peasant's
Lodge, accompany'd with half a score Huntsmen
follow'd by thirty Dogs, and does more Mischief
in a Minute than the Hare cou'd have done if he
had liv'd a thousand Years. He was pursu'd quite
through the Garden; but in spite of the Dogs he
made his way through a Hole in the Wall; upon
which the Gentleman advised the Countryman to
stop it up, and congratulated him on his Deliver-
ance from his Enemy. The *Genoese* have had just
this Gardener's Fate.. They paid 6000 *Germans*
for a long time, which cost them immense Sums.
The Chiefs of the Rebels have got off like this
Hare. They made their Escape, and having im-
plor'd the Emperor's Affistance and Mercy, he
granted it to them, and obtain'd their Pardon from
the *Genoese*. But that Prince had scarce withdrawn
his

his Troops from the Isle of *Corsica* when it revolted again, and the *Genoese* have had the Mortification to find they have laid out their Money to no purpose, and that they are obliged to renew a War, of which they know not what will be the Issue.

Direct thy Answer to me at *Turin*, for I set out for that City to-morrow, and shall stay there some Days.

Fare thee well, and may'st thou enjoy Peace, Wealth, and Health.



LETTER XXXV.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS,
a Rabbi, at Constantinople.

Paris—

I Still expect the Books from *Amsterdam*; and have writ several times to *Moses Rodrigo* to press him to send them to me; but to no purpose: He puts me off to the End of the Month, and I shall not be able to send them to *Constantinople* in less than five Weeks.

I have search'd all the Booksellers Shops at *Paris* for some choice new Tracts, to add to those which I shall receive from *Holland*, but found nothing good besides what I have already sent thee, except two little Romances that are lately come out. The first is intitled; *Les Egaremens du Cœur & de l' Esprit*; the Author of which I have already made mention of in my former Letters *. He writes in a pure Stile, understands Human Nature, and

* *Crebillon the Son.*

he lays the Heart of Man open with a great deal of Clearness and Justice: But in this Work he has fallen into an Error, which he has often condemn'd in the Writings of others. He makes it plain to the Reader, that he affects to be witty; and there are some Passages where Nature is sacrificed to the false Glare. But this Error, which is not common, is repair'd by a thousand Beauties. The Author of this Romance paints rather than writes Things; and the Pictures he draws strike the Imagination with Pleasure. Do but consider if it be possible to define the first Surprize of a Heart with more Justness and Clearness. *Without searching into the Motive of my Action, I managed, I interpreted her Looks; I endeavour'd to make her least Motions my Lessons. So much Obstinacy in not losing Sight of her made me at last taken notice of by her. She look'd upon me in her turn, I fix'd her without knowing it, and during the Charm with which I was captivated whether I wou'd or not, I know not what my Eyes told her, but she turn'd hers away with a sort of Blush.*

None but a Man who was at that Juncture, or had been formerly, in Love cou'd, with so much Truth and Delicacy, have painted all the Motions of the Soul. Genius, Wit, and Learning cannot draw Pictures so much to the Life, it being a Point to which the Heart alone can attain. When I say the Heart, I mean a tender Heart, and one that is in such Situations. The following is the Character of a Prude in Love. *Being not to be depended upon in her Proceedings, she was a perpetual Mixture of Tenderness and Severity: She seem'd to yield only to be the more obstinate in her Opposition. If she thought she had, by what she said, disposed me to entertain any sort of Hopes, being on the Watch how to disappoint me, she presently resum'd that Air which*

which had made me so often tremble, and left me nothing to trust to but a melancholy Uncertainty. One cannot help being struck with the Truth and Nature which prevail in this Character. Without an Acquaintance with the World, and a perfect Knowledge of Mankind, 'tis impossible to attain to this Point. 'Tis difficult to distinguish the different Forms, and, as one may say, the internal Motives of different Characters. A mean Writer does only take a Sketch of 'em; but a good Author paints them, sets them plainly in Sight, and exposes them as they really are.

A Romance is consider'd in no other Light than as a Work composed only for Amusement; but something else ought to be the Scope of it: For every Book that has not the Useful as well as the Agreeable, does not deserve the Esteem of good Judges. The Heart ought to be instructed at the same time as the Mind is amused; and this is the Quality with which the greatest Men have render'd their Writings famous.

A Writer who, abounding with bold Fictions and Imaginations, amuses the Readers for a matter of a dozen Volumes with Incidents, work'd up artfully and importantly, and who nevertheless in the Close of his Book entertains his Reader's Imagination with nothing but Rapes, Duels, Sighs, Despair, and Tears *; has not the Talent of instructing, nor can he attain to Perfection; for he possesses but the least part of his Art. An Author who pleases without instructing, does not please long; for he sees his Book grow mouldy in the Bookseller's Shop, and his Works have the Fate of sorry Sermons and cold Panegyric.

Heredofore Romances were nothing more than a Rhapsody of tragical Adventures, which captivated

* *La Calprenede.*

the Imagination and distract'd the Heart *. 'Twas pleasant enough to read them, but nothing more was got by it than feeding the Mind with Chimæras, which were often hurtful. The Youth greedily swallow'd all the wild and gigantic Ideas of those fabulous Heroes, and when their Genius's were accustomed to enormous Imaginations, they had no longer a Relish for the Probable. For some time past this manner of Thinking has been chang'd : Good Taste is again return'd ; the Reasonable has succeeded in the place of the Supernatural ; and instead of a Number of Incidents with which the least Facts were overcharg'd, a plain lively Narration is required, such as is supported by Characters that give us the *Utile Dulci*.

Some Authors have wrote in this Taste, and have advanc'd more or less towards Perfection, in proportion as they have copy'd Nature †.

There are others who carry Things to Extremity ; for, by affecting to appear natural, they become low and creeping, and have neither the Talent of pleasing nor of instructing ‡.

Some have had recourse to insipid Allegory ||, thinking to please by a new Taste ; but their Works dy'd in their Birth, and were so little read that they escaped Criticism.

If the bad Authors were but to reflect on the Talents and Qualifications necessary for a good Romance, Works of this kind would no longer be their Refuge. A Man who is press'd both by Hunger and Thirst, sets about writing a Book, and tho'

* The *Polexandre* of Gomberville, the *Ariana* of Des Maretz, &c.

† *Le Prevot d'Exiles.* See the *Bibliotheque des Romans*.

‡ *Histoire du Chevalier des Essars, & de la Comtesse de Merci*, &c.

|| *Fanferedin*, &c.

he has not Knowledge enough to write History, nor Genius for Works of Morality, he stains a couple of Quires of Paper with a Heap of ill-digested Adventures, which he relates without Taste, and without Genius, and carries his Work to a Bookseller, who, were he oblig'd to buy it by Weight, and to give him but twice the Cost of the Paper, wou'd pay more for it than the Worth of it. Perhaps there is as much need for Wit, an Acquaintance with Mankind, and the Knowledge of the Passions, to compose a Romance as to write a History. The only Qualification to paint Manners and Customs, is a long Experience; and a Man must have examin'd the various Characters very closely, to be able to describe them to a Nicety.

How can an Author, whose common Vocation is staining of Paper, and spending his whole Time in a Coffee-house or in a Garret, give a just Definition of a Prince, a Courtier, or a fine Lady? He never sees those Persons but as he walks the Streets; and I can scarce think that the Mud with which he is often dash'd by their Equipages, communicates to him any Share of their Sentiments. Yet there is not a wretched Author but makes a Duke and Dutches speak as he fancies. But when a Man of Fashion comes to cast his Eye on these ridiculous Performances, he is perfectly surpriz'd to see the Conversation of *Margaret the Hawker*, retail'd by the Name of the Dutches of ——, or the Marchioness of ——. Yet be these Books ever so bad, abundance of 'em are sold; for many People, extravagantly fond of Novelty, who only judge of Things superficially, buy those Works, tho' by the Perusal of 'em they acquire a Taste as remote from a happy Talent of Writing, as the Authors themselves are.

Don't

Don't fear, dear *Isaac*, that I shall ever send thee a Collection of such poultry Books. Be a Man ever so fond at *Constantinople* of Romances and Histories of Gallantry, 'tis expected they should serve not only for Pleasure but for Edification.

The second Book that I have bought, seemis to me to be written with this View. 'Tis intitled, *Memoirs of the Marquis de Mirmon; or the Solitary Philosopher*. The Author writes with an easy lively Stile *; and 'tis plain, that he himself was acquainted with the Characters which he paints. Without affecting to appear to have as much Wit as the former Author that I mention'd to thee, he delivers the Truth every where in an amiable Dress. If any Fault can be found with him, 'tis explaining himself a little too boldly; and he is also reproach'd with a sort of Negligence pardonable in a Man whose Stile is in general so pure as his is. The following is his Character of Solitude. *'Tis not to torment himself that a wise Man seems to separate himself from Mankind: He is far from imposing new Laws on himself, and only follows those that are already prescrib'd to his Hands. If he lays himself under any new Laws, he reserves to himself the Power of changing them, being their absolute Master, and not their Slave. Being content to cool his Passions, and to govern them by his Reason, he does not imagine it impossible to tame them to his own Fancy, and does not convert what was formerly an innocent Amusement to him, into a Monster to terrify him. He retains in Solitude all the Pleasures which Men of Honour have a Relish for in the World, and only puts it out of their Power of being hurtful, by preventing them from being too violent.*

There are several other Passages in this Book, which are as remarkable for their Perspicuity as

* *M. d'Argens,*

their

their Justness. Such is the Description of the Disgust which sometimes attends Marriages. *When Persons are in Love, they put the best Side outwards. A Man who is desirous of pleasing, takes a world of Care to conceal his Defects. A Woman knows still better how to dissemble. Two Persons often study for six Months together to bubble one another, and at last they marry, and punish one another the Remainder of their Lives for their Dissimulation.*

You will own, dear Isaac, that there is a glaring Truth and Perspicuity in this Character, which strikes the Mind. These naked Thoughts present themselves with Lustre to the Imagination, which cannot help being pleased, because they are so just. If the Authors who write Romances in this new Taste, would always adhere to the Truth, and never suffer themselves to be perverted to any new Mode (for this is what Works of Wit are liable to) their Writings wou'd probably be as useful in forming the Manners as Comedy, because they wou'd render Romances the Picture of Human Life. A covetous Man will therein find himself painted in such natural Colours; a Coquette will therein see her Picture so resembling her, that their Reflection upon reading the Character will be more useful to them than the long-winded Exhortations of a Fryar, who makes himself hoarse with Exclamation, and often tires out the Patience of his Hearers.

Authors who set about writing Romances, ought to study to paint Manners according to Nature, and to expose the most secret Sentiments of the Heart. As their Works are but ingenious Fictions, they can never please otherwise than as they approach to the Probable. Nor is every thing that favours of the Marvellous, esteem'd more among Men of Taste than pure Nonsense. Both generally

go together, and the Authors who fall into gigantic or unnatural Ideas, have commonly a declamatory Stile, bordering upon a pompous and unintelligible Diction.

The Stile of Romances ought to be simple; indeed it should be more florid than that of History, but not have all that Energy and Majesty. Gallantry is the Soul of Romance, and Grandeur and Justnes that of History. A Person must be very well acquainted with the World to excel in the one, and he must have Learning and Politics to distinguish himself in the other. Good Sense, Perspicuity, Justness of Characters, Truth of Descriptions, Purity of Stile are necessary in both. The Ladies are born Judges of the Goodness of a Romance. Posterity decides the Merit of a History.

Fare thee well, dear *Isaac*. As soon as I have receiv'd the new Books from *Holland*, I will send them to thee.



LETTER XXXVI.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS,
a Rabbi, at Constantinople.

Paris —

I AM able to converse freely with thee, and to enjoy that Pleasure which renders the Conversation of Philosophers so charming. Thy Quality and Character as a Rabbi, don't force me to disguise my Sentiments to thee. Thou permittest me to lock up my most secret Thoughts in thy Breast, and

and art not offended at certain Doubts which I discover to thee. Tell me, dear *Isaac*, art thou really persuaded that the *Israelites* are the only People in the World who will be Partakers, after Death, of the Glory of the Almighty ? For my part, I believe this to be a mistaken Opinion, and when thou hast duly consider'd the matter thou wilt be of the same Mind. Is it possible that a merciful God could create so many Millions of Men with a Design to make them for ever miserable ? Could they themselves chuse whether they would be born of the Tribe of *Jacob* ; and ought they to suffer Punishment for a Thing which was not in their Power to prevent ? Thou wilt answer perhaps, that we don't know the immense Secrets of God, that 'tis impertinent for a finite Creature to go about to dive into the profound Mysteries of the infinite Creator. But this Question is not a Mystery, it being as evident as our Existence, and as easy to demonstrate.

I don't believe that thou deniest this Principle, that God being sovereign Goodness, nothing is good, nothing is just, farther than it approaches to and resembles his Justice and Goodness. I am also going to lay down a second Principle, as certain as the first. Our Reason is a Gift from God, who cannot deceive us ; 'tis a Present that he has made to us, to enable us to know and serve him. If this Reason, in the most evident Cases, misled us, God would deceive us ; which cannot be maintained, God being the Truth itself *.

Now

* Nunc circumspiciam diligentius an forte adhuc apud me alia sint ad quæ nondum respexi. Sum certus me esse Rem cogitantem, nunquid ergo etiam scio quid requiratur ut de aliquâ eâ Re sim certus ? Nempe in hac prima Cognitione nihil aliud est quam clara quædam et di-

Now this Reason tells me, and clearly demonstrates it, that 'tis inconsistent with Justice that a Person should be punished for an involuntary Crime, and a Crime in which he has no Share *. In vain will it be objected to me, that the Ideas which I have of Justice deceive me. They cannot deceive me, because they are a Consequence of my Reason; nor can they be false, because they are verify'd by the Resemblance they bear to the Goodness and Justice of God, which my Reason convinces me ought to be such.

distincta Perceptio ejus quod affirmo; quæ sanè non sufficeret ad me certum de Rei Veritate reddendum, si posset unquam contingere ut aliquod ita clarè et distinctè percipere falsum esset. Ac proinde jam videor pro Regulâ generali posse statuere, illud omne esse verum, quod valde clarè & distinctè percipio. Des Cartes Meditationes de prima Philosophia, &c. Medit. iii. p. 15. Amsterdam Edition.

* The chief of the Attributes (of God) which seems necessary to be considered here, consists in that he is very True, and the Source of all Wisdom; so that 'tis not possible he should deceive us, that is to say, that he should be directly the Cause of the Errors to which we are subject, and which we experience in ourselves. For altho' the Art of Deceiving seems to be a Mark of the Subtilty of the Mind among Men, yet the Desire of Deceiving never proceeds from any Motive but Malice, or Fear and Folly, and by consequence cannot be attributed to God. From hence it follows, that the Faculty of Knowledge, which he gives us, never perceives any Object but what is true or real, as far as it is capable of perceiving; that is to say, as far as it knows clearly and distinctly, because we should have reason to think that God would be a Deceiver, if he had given us such a sort of Knowledge as that we should mistake the False for the True, when we make the best use of it. *Principles of the Philosophy of Rene Des Cartes, Part i. p. 23 and 24.*

Lay aside for one Moment, Dear *Isaac*, the Prejudices imbib'd in thy Childhood, and look with a Philosophical Eye upon an honest *Nazarene* who lives in the midst of *Paris*. He believes and serves the same God as we do. He observes the Ten Commandments which he gave to *Moses*. He is brought up in Prejudices, which induce him to think our Holy Law is fulfilled, and on that which he professes, as the New Covenant. Thou knowest the Power of Prejudices, and of the first *Ideas* with which we are inspired. The *Arabian Authors* have a Saying, *That the Governors of Youth preside over the Stars of their Nativity.* Why should'st thou think, Dear *Isaac*, that God would bind this *Nazarene* by such strong Bands, and hinder him from entring into the Faith of *Israel*, only to have the Pleasure of destroying him?

I am astonish'd when I read in some of the *Nazarene Books* this impious Principle, That there's a Necessity for some People to be Damn'd for the Glory of God, just as Kings have Slaves to work at the Oar for the Glory of their Majesties. Has God, that immense Being, who out of Nothing made every Thing, who can in an Instant annihilate the Universe, has he need of the Torment of any unhappy Creatures for his Glory? If he punishes them, 'tis an Effect of his Justice, and of the Order established by his Wisdom. But his Wrath does not fall upon Crimes which are owing to invincible Ignorance, and to a superior Power.

The *Nazarenes* have several Doctors among them*, whose Opinion I think very rational. They say, they judge no body, but being content with honouring God, and professing the Religion which they think the purest, and the most conducive to Salva-

* The Protestants.

tion, they decide nothing as to that of other Men, but leave it to God to pronounce his Decrees. I wish that all the Rabbies thought as discreetly, and had not so sublime an Idea of their own Nation as if it was the only one capable of receiving the Favours of God, and as if the Almighty had nothing to do, but to take care of a handful of Strollers and Vagabonds. Our Way of Thinking seems to me to be an Insult upon the Human Race. We are all the Children of *Adam*; God has created the one as well as the others. It was in his Power to have made all Mankind *Israelites*. What did he form *Nazarenes* and *Musulmen* only to make them miserable? And can the sovereign Goodness take Delight in Injustice and Cruelty?

I know that our Rabbies don't abandon the Opinion that the *Nazarenes* are reprobated; and they make it an essential Article of our Religion. But I divest myself of that Authority which they formerly acquired over my Mind. Sound Philosophy teaches me to examine an Opinion before I embrace it. When I was young, I suffer'd myself to be led by Fear and Weakness into the Belief of every thing taught by my Nurses, Parents, and Masters. Age has taught me to reform my Understanding, and to make an exact Review of all the Opinions I ever entertained. I give Credit to the Rabbies no farther than as their Decisions agree with the clear and distinct Ideas which I have received immediately from God. I laugh heartily at the ridiculous Attachment which the *Jews* have to the Fictions of the *Talmud*; and satisfy'd with the Substance of our Religion, I condemn its Superstitions.

I would not make such Confession of my Opinion to any other Man except Thee, but I know that when I repose my secret Thoughts in thy Breast, I shut them up in the Mansion of Truth and Silence.

lence. When I see a number of People in any Country making Profession of a different Religion; when I know them all to be honest Men; when I examine their Manners, and find them full of Candour and Sincerity, I can't imagine that God, who is just in his Decrees, and gracious in his Mercy, should punish Men, who acting in Obedience to the internal Legislator, I mean the Law of Nature and that of Conscience, have been guilty of no other Crime, than conforming to the Religion of their Ancestors in which they were born. Was it at their own Choice to receive Life from one Father rather than another? I think there's a Barbarity in the Decision which our Rabbies have pronounced as to the Fate of the *Nazarenes* after Death.

I foresee, dear *Isaac*, what Objections thou might'st make, and shall answer them beforehand.

The Belief of the Being of a God, implies the Necessity of serving him. The Worship that ought to be paid to him, has been settled by himself; consequently there is no deviating from it without being guilty of Sin. This is the common Argument in all Religions. They all think theirs to be the Worship prescribed by the Word of God. Therefore when I answer our Rabbies, I answer all other Doctors who decide so boldly concerning the Salvation of Man. I must take notice of that solid Answer given by some *Nazarene* Doctors, who near two hundred Years ago, reformed a multitude of Abuses*. Their Enemies ask'd them, if they believed that they who adhered to the Faith and Opinions of the sovereign Pontiff could be saved? *We damn no body*, say they, *'tis wicked Actions and mortal Sins that destroy Souls, and not the pedantic Decision of weak Men.* If this be the Case, said their Adversaries, *Why don't you*

* The Reformed Doctors of the Conferences at *Poiss.*
N 2 *enmbrace*

embrace our Opinions to be in a full Certainty? for we believe that you are damn'd. In a state of Doubt, therefore range yourselves on the surest side; which, said the Doctors gravely, is ours. We grant indeed that Salvation may be had in your Party, but the Errors and Superstition with which it is tainted, render the Thing so difficult that 'tis almost impossible; whereas with us every thing conducts us to the Way of Salvation, and every thing makes the Passage to it easy.

'There is no doubt my dear Isaac, but there is a Worship enjoin'd by God himself; but 'tis to facilitate Mens Salvation, and not to destroy them. Happy are they to whom God hath reveal'd it. But in my Opinion, 'tis an Impiety to say, that he created other Men to be damn'd *. 'Tis indeed
more

* I can't comprehend for what reason the modern Catholic Divines absolutely give up all those to Damnation, whom they look upon as out of the Pale of the Church, when several of the Fathers have decided, in clear and express Terms, that the Pagans, who were Virtuous, might be saved, without any, or at least, but a very confus'd Acquaintance with the Law of Moses. Now, I would fain hear any valid Reason that can be given to persuade me, that the Divinity shoud incline to destroy Men who never had any Notion, or at least but very faint Ideas of Christianity, when he pardoned those who were out of a possibility of being instructed in Judaism. *The Church, a Divine will say, has so decided it, and we ought to submit to its Judgment.* But this Church, of whose Infallibility there is such Boasting, must probably have been of another way of Thinking in the Time of St. Bernard, than it is now. For this Father writing to *Hugo de St. Victor*, tells him, that he could not believe, that the Declaration of God made to Nicodemus, *Except a Man be born again of Water*

more difficult for them to attain to Heaven ; but if they are good, wise and virtuous, the Almighty would sooner work a Miracle to draw them to him, than suffer Virtue to be requited with everlasting Torments.

The Difference of Religions in the World made *Cardan* run into a whimsical Mistake, worthy indeed of the Disciple of Judicial Astrology. He had a Notion, that this Variety depended on the different Influence of the Planets. That *European* Philosopher maintain'd, that the Religion of the *Jews* was oblig'd for its *Origin* to *Saturn*, that of the *Christians* to *Jupiter*, and that of the *Mahometans* to *Mars*. For that of the *Pagans* he assign'd several different Constellations. Such are the Errors those fall into who ramble far off in quest of the Cause of a Thing which is apparent of it self. Why should what is owing to Mens Caprice and Inconstancy be made dependant

Water and the Holy Spirit, he shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, ought to be taken in its utmost Latitude, and apply'd to those who had no Knowledge of it ; the *Jews*, other People, and all the virtuous *Pagans*, before *Jesus Christ* came into the World, having been cleansed from Original Sin, and being in a capacity of Salvation, by living according to the Law of Nature. *Who is so ignorant as not to know, that in the antient Times, other Remedies were not wanting besides Baptism against Original Sin ? For this end the Sacrament of Circumcision was delivered to Abraham and his Seed.* And in the Nations that profess the Christian Scheme, we believe indeed that Adult Persons are expiated by their Faith and Sacrifices, and that the Faith of the Parents profiteth, and even sufficeth for little Children. St. Bernard's 72d Epistle to *Hugo de St. Victor*.

St. Thomas asserts, that the Gentiles were in a Capacity of being sav'd, though with more Uncertainty and greater Difficulty than the *Jews*. The Gentiles obtain'd

dependant on the Planets? There is in all Religions some new Sentiment started, which Time ripens to a particular Opinion and Creed. Had *Saturn* any Concern with the Ten Tribes, that separated themselves to sacrifice upon the High-Places? Had *Jupiter* any thing to do with the Brain of *Arius*, notwithstanding the pretended Influences of the Planets, of which I have already shewn thee the Ridiculousness and Impossibility in my former Letters?

The Opinion of our Rabbies, as to the Destruction of the *Nazarenes*, is a Consequence of the Vanity of our Nation. Suffer me to unbosom myself and to discover my most secret Thoughts to thee. We always had a Haughtiness and a Pride, which have drawn upon us the Hatred of all other People. We, even to this day, retain the same Faults; and though we are dispers'd all over the World,

vation more perfectly and securely under the Observances of the Law, than under the Law of Nature alone; and therefore to such Observances were they admitted. As even now the Laity pass to the Clerical Order, and the Seculars to the State of the Regulars, although they might be sav'd without it. Thomae Summa in Prim. Secundi Quæst. 98. Art. 5.

One of the greatest Divines that liv'd a little before the Council of Trent, maintain'd, that both the antient and modern Pagans might be sav'd by living justly, though they were in an invincible State of Ignorance. *All that ever did, or do now exist, to whom the Gospel has not reach'd, since they could obtain Faith in Christ by no human Means, cannot be supposed blameable for their Ignorance, so long as they wanted Doctors to teach them.* Andreas Vega de *præparatione Adalorum ad Justificationem*, lib. vi, cap. 18.

World, tho' we are the Objects of the Contempt, Hatred, and Banter of all Nations, yet we have not alter'd our way of Thinking. What can give occasion for this Vanity I know not. 'Tis true that our Ancestors appear'd upon the Stage of the World with very great Splendour, in the Time of *Solomon*, and some other victorious Kings: But they were very often humbled, and carried into long and severe Captivities by the *Persians* and *Affyrians*, and afterwards subdued by the *Greeks*, and destroy'd by the *Romans*.

We have always been the Sport of all Nations; and if we go back to the remotest Ages, even to those before our Departure from *Egypt*, we shall find Characters of our People, that are not very advantageous. We read in the Fragments that are left us by *Manetho*, the *Egyptian* Priest, that in the Reign of *Amenophis*, a Company of nasty Leprous People went out of *Egypt* under the Conduct of *Moses*, to go and settle in *Syria*. The Testimony of this Author, is confirmed by that of another celebrated Author among the *Greeks**, who says that 250000 Lepers were banish'd out of *Egypt* by Order of *Amenophis*. Several other Historians there are, that indeed differ as to the Name of the King who reign'd at the time of the Jews Departure, but they are all agreed as to the Scabs and Boils, with which they were for the most part cover'd. *Tacitus* the famous *Roman* Author, speaks at large of this Matter, and corroborates the Op-

I don't see why we should now believe, what was not believ'd two or three hundred Years ago. Surely, the Divines are not acting the same Part as the Physicians do in *Moliere*, who makes them say, *that heretofore the Heart and the Milt were on the Left Side, but now a-days they are brought intirely to the Right Side.*

* *Chæremon.*

nion of the other Authors †. We ought not therefore to be quite so vain, and instead of despising other Nations on account of the Favours which God has distributed to ours, we should remember that 'tis a Proof of his sovereign Goodness, which raises up the Humble, and pulls down the Mighty. Thus God, to display the Greatness of his Mercy, was pleased to single out the vilest and the most ungrateful of the People, of which the Backslidings and Murmurings of our Fathers in the Wilderness are plain Proofs. The *Nazarenes* are not so elated as we, at the Favours which they think the Divinity has shewn them. They own that they were once miserable *Gentiles*, but the Knowledge which they afterwards had of the true God, taught them to pity, and not to despise, such as they thought mistaken.

Fare thee well, dear *Isaac*, and take care to preserve thy Health.

† Historians are generally agreed in this Point, that when *Egypt* was infected with a Leprosy, King *Bochoris*, by Advice of the Oracle of *Ammon*, drove them out of his Country, as a useless Multitude, odious to the Divinity. They add, that as they were scatter'd thro' the Desarts, and were quite broken-hearted, *Moses*, one of their Leaders, advised them to look for no Assistance, either from God or Man, who had abandon'd them, but to follow him as their Cælestial Guide, who would deliver them out of Danger. *D'Ablancourt's Translation of Tacitus's Annals, lib. 5.*



LETTER XXXVII.

JACOB BRITO to AARON MONCEGA.

Turin —

“T IS now two Days, my dear *Moncega*, that I have been at *Turin*. The *Piedmontese* seem to me to be a People, that I had no true Idea of. Their Character is a Composition of the *French* Humour and the *Italian*. They are Petits-Maitres, Slaves to Fashions, and as full of Compliments as the *French*. They are Phlegmatic, Revengeful, Slaves to the Monks, bashful Lovers like the *Italians*; and they have as much Vanity as those two Nations together.

Turin is a very pretty City, full of Buildings, which are of noble Architecture in the Grand Goût. Those who frequent the Court, incline towards the *French* Manners, but the Burghers copy more after the *Italians*; yet, as I have told thee, neither the one nor the other resemble those two Nations intirely.

The principal Assemblies and Assignations for Love are commonly in the Churches. There are few Days but what are set a-part for celebrating the Festival of some Saint, when there is a concourse from all Parts to the Church that is dedicated to such Saint, where there is an excellent Concert of Music. There they spend part of the Day. The Beaus, the Belles, the Abbés of the Court, are regularly

at these Feasts *, and nothing so much resembles those of antient *Greece*. The Saint of the Day has a fine and numerous Appearance, according to the Goodness of the Music that is to be perform'd in his Church. When he happens to be a Saint of any Distinction and Fashion, such as St. *Ignatius*, or St. *Philip de Neri*, a Musician who has very good Pay, and who never touches the Violin but on particular Occasions, draws a vast concourse of People. St. *Francis* and St. *John de Matha*, perhaps never had the Pleasure of having a good Symphony, for want of wherewithal to pay for it.

When these Assemblies, which the *Piedmontese* call the *Salute*, break up, they go and take the Air till the Dusk of the Evening in the public Squares. The Esplanade which is between the City and Citadel, is the most frequented Walk during the Heats of the Summer. There the *Piedmontese* Nobility with their Heads as erect as Ostriches, their Hands by their Sides, and lordly Countenances, display a Figure half *French* and half *Italian*. They never go off of this Walk, but to the Coffee-House, to take a Draught of Jelly, which is commonly their Supper †. The *Piedmontese* are very much addicted to Frugality; a fine Character, if such a Virtue was not with them a Consequence of their Avarice. They are glad that the Heat of their Climate furnishes them with a Pretext for not eating Suppers. But it seems this Regimen, so necessary to their Health, is not observ'd when they are invited to any excellent Repast.

* These Festivals are common to all the Towns of *Italy*.

† This is also the Supper of all the *Italians*.

The *Italians* have in general for some time past at least been very ignorant †, and the *Piedmontese* are more so; for I don't-believe there ever was an Author amongst them, whose Reputation extended above ten Leagues round. None of the *Italian* Writers, of ever so little Note, are of their Country. A *Piedmontese*, whom I reproach'd for this, answer'd me gravely, that I was mistaken, since *Plautus* and *Terence* were both *Piedmontese*. I ask'd him how long this new Discovery had been made? He answer'd me, that he did not know; but he had heard the Thing affirm'd by a very Ingenious Man, who commonly spent his time in a Coffee-House which was frequented by all the learned Men in *Turin*. That's the Rendezvous of all the Wits of this Country. Thou would'st be amaz'd, dear *Monceca*, if thou was't but to be transported on a sudden from the Academy of Sciences to this little Litterary Theatre, where Yesterday I had the Mortification to hear more Impertinences and Absurdities than ever where committed to Paper by half of the *Spanish* Divines.

The Ignorance of the *Piedmontese* is owing to two Causes; their vain slothful Temper, and the Submission to which they are reduc'd by the Inquisition. As soon as they understand the *Latin* of the Bible or the Mass-Book, they think themselves Scholars of the first Clas, congratulate themselves upon the Efforts of their Imagination, and can't conceive how their Understandings came to be rais'd to such a Perfection. 'Twou'd be dangerous indeed for them to

† This demands an Explanation. I don't look upon a Poet, who knows only to make Verses, or an Author of Romances, to be Men of very great Learning. I only speak of the modern *Italians*, amongst whom it cannot be deny'd, there's neither any Philosopher, or Historian of Distinction.

endeavour to penetrate farther; for the least Light that would dispel their Darkness, might draw the Indignation of the Inquisition upon them; Ignorance being the Basis of Tranquility among the Monks.

The *Piedmontese* have not Vivacity enough to make any Figure in the *Belles Lettres*; they can't come up to the Authors that the other *Italian States* have bred; and there is more difference with regard to the Heat of Imagination, between a *Florentine* and a *Piedmontese*, than there is between a *Frenchman* and a *Muscovite*. I could never guess at the Cause of such an Inequality, and if I had not been myself a Witness of the Truth of the Fact, I should never have believed it. But they say, 'tis so strange Thing to see two neighbouring People that speak the same Language, and have the same Manners and Customs, of different Genius's. The Natives of *Languedoc* and *Provence* are fam'd for the Sprightliness and Warmth of their Imagination, whereas there's none so dull and stupid as the *Auvergnacs* and the *Savoyards*. The *Flemings* are the most corrupted with Superstitions of any People in the World, the Church of *Ghent* alone containing more Religious Toys, than are in *Italy* and *Spain* together; but their Neighbours, the *Dutch*, have banish'd Bigotry and Monkish Devotion out of their Provinces, insomuch, that one may say, that every *Dutchman*, be his Religion what it will, is a Philosopher, who has refin'd it, and reduc'd it to the Rules of good Sense. A *Nazarene Papist* at *Amsterdam*, is a much more reasonable Creature than such a Man at *Rome*; and an Enthusiast there, is not so much a Fanatic, as he is in the *Cevennois*, nor a Quaker so ridiculous as he is at *London*. Good Sense and Tranquility are perhaps a necessary Consequence of that which presides in the States, and the Examples of Wisdom and

and Moderation which are given by the *Nazarenes* who are not Papists, and who are the chief Men in *Holland*, have an Influence over the rest of the People.

Let the Difference between the Genius of the *Dutch* and the *Flemings*, the Natives of *Provence* and *Savoy* come from what Cause it will, 'tis nevertheless certain, that so it is; and between the two latter, 'tis even surprizing with regard to the Great Men.

The *Savoyards* never acquir'd any Fame in the Republic of Letters, nor in the Invention of Arts, unless we were to ascribe to the Effort of Imagination, the Science of Sweeping Chimneys, and carrying Monkeys to all the Foreign Countries, which are Talents that I don't think ought to be Qualifications for obtaining a Place in the *French Academy*, or that of *La Crusca* in *Italy*. The Natives of *Provence* have successively produc'd a Number of Great Men, and not to mention the *Troubadours*, who were born in their Country, and who were the first Poets of the *Gauls*, most of the Great Men of these latter Times, were born in *Provence*. *Gassendi*, that excellent Philosopher; *Massillon*, an Orator, of the first Class; Father *Thomassin*, an Historian, worthy of the highest Commendation; the famous *Peiresc*, a celebrated Antiquarian; *Tournefort* the most skillful of the Botanists; all these illustrious Genius's were born in this Country much about the same Time. The Sciences were always cultivated in this Province, and from the Heart of this Country, they spread into the rest of *France*. The † *Troubadours*, Story-Tellers, Singers, Jugglers, Gamesters, assembled at the Court of the Counts of *Provence*; and there they practised the Pieces of Wit, whereof they were the Inventors, which were call'd the

† A sort of Minstrels that sung and play'd at the same time on the Violin.

Sirvantes, Tensons, † and the *Court of Love*. The other People among the *Gauls*, envious of the Advantage of the People of *Provence*, would fain have had a share in them: They learnt of the *Troubadours* to make Verses, and Songs; and *Thibaud*, the Count de *Champagne*, who drew them to his Court, signaliz'd himself in this kind of Poetry. He was prodigiously fond of Queen *Blanche*, Mother to *Lewis IX.* whom the *Nazarenes* look upon as a Saint; and his Love is still to be seen in the Songs which he made for her.

The *Troubadours*, Jugglers, Ballad-Singers, &c. soon acquir'd so much Esteem all over *France*, that there was a Disposition to give them all the Encouragement for travelling from one part of the Kingdom to another, and such Advantages as might engage them to fix their Residence there; *Lewis* issued a Decree, importing, that the Poetafters should be free of all Toll, Duty, &c. on reciting a Stanza of a Song to the Toll-Gatherers, and that the Strollers should enjoy the same Franchises by making their Monkey shew Tricks. From hence came the Proverb, *Paier en Gambades, et en Monnoie de Singe*, i. e. To laugh at one's Creditor, and defraud him of his Money. From that Time, the Love of the Arts and Sciences very much decay'd in *France*. Some Natives of *Provence*, whom I often saw at *Galata*, *Rome*, and *Genoa*, assured me, that a Toll-Gatherer, or a Customhouse-Officer, or his Agent, would not bate one Doit of their Duties for the Rehearsal of the intire Tragedy of *Phædra*. The same Conduct is observ'd at *Turin*, where the very Original of *Hierosolyma Liberata*, or of *Pastor Fido*, would not purchase a Morsel of Bread.

In this City we find a great many poor People, whom a bad Harvest for two successive Years, has

† These are Satyrs and Love-Sonnets.

reduc'd to great Necessity. The Burghers pitying their Misery, endeavour to assist them; and the Monks putting a Force upon their usual Avarice, distribute Bread and Broth to them on certain Days of the Week at the Gate of their Convents. The *Nazarene Fryars* have this Custom at *Rome*, and there are few of their Monasteries where they don't give to Beggars every Day a small Portion of the immense Wealth which they amass.

Upon this Head I will tell thee a Passage concerning a *Spaniard*, which completely characterizes the ridiculous Vanity of his Nation. There's a Multitude of Students that come to *Rome*, from *Castille*, *Arragon*, *Andalusia*, &c. to obtain some Benefice from the sovereign Pontiff. They beg their Bread all the way from *Madrid* to *Italy*. By the Help of an Oil-Cloth Band, garnish'd with some Shells, and a great Stick, which they call a Pilgrim's Staff, they find Charity wherever they come; for the *Nazarenes* have as much Regard for the Pilgrims of St. *James*, and our Lady of *Loretto*; as the *Mahometans* have for those of *Medina* and *Mecca*. When these *Spaniards* are arriv'd at *Rome*, they have nothing to live upon but what they go and fetch every day from the Gates of the Convents. This done, they take the Air gravely the rest of the Day in the Square of *Spain*, and look upon themselves to be as good Men as any *Roman* Prince. A *Castilian* newly arriv'd, and who did not yet know the Hour when the Broth used to be distributed, address'd himself to a poor *French* Clergyman, who liv'd upon the Alms of a Convent. His *Spanish* Pride could not bear that he should so much as ask for the House where they gave out the Broth: He thought that way of speaking ignoble; and after having study'd how to express himself in an oblique Manner, he thought of none better than

to ask the Frenchman, whether he had been yet to fetch his Chocolate, *a usted tomado su Chocolate?* My Chocolate! reply'd the Parisian, Where the Devil d'ye think I should have Money for Chocolate? I live upon Alms, and I wait till the Broth is distributed at the Franciscans Convent. You have not been there yet then? said the Castilian. No, reply'd the Parisian, but now is the Time, and thither I am going. I beg you to take me along with you, said the proud Spaniard; and there you shall see Don Antonio Perez de Valcabro, de Redia, de Montalva, de Vega, &c. give a *Mark* of his Humility, which shall be a Lesson to Posterity. And pray who are all those Gentlemen? said the Frenchman. None but I myself, reply'd the Castilian. If it be so, reply'd the Frenchman, you ought rather to say you'll give a Proof of Poverty and a good Stomach.

Fare thee well, dear *Monceca*, Live with Contentment, and preserve thy Health.



LETTER XXXVIII.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS,
a Rabbi, at Constantinople.

Paris—

MY Philosophical Meditations are sometimes interrupted by the Study of History. I unbend my Mind by running over the Transactions of the remotest Times. I converse with Great Men that have been dead for these two or three thousand Years past, and when I read what they said and did, I almost fancy myself their Cotemporary.

The

The Perplexity and Confusion one meets with till two or three hundred Years after the Deluge, is a great Misfortune, dear *Isaac*, to all who apply to the Knowledge of History. Few Authors have wrote of Times so far back, and what they have is not come down to us, except a few Scraps and Fragments, so ambiguously and differently related, as only occasions Disputes among the Learned, which are the more difficult to be cleared up, because they rather propose their own Guesses and Opinions than true Explanations. To search for antient History in such Writings, is to study the Sentiments of the Moderns, and the Systems of their Imagination.

The Knowledge of the Actions of the first Race of Men, is a vast unknown Ocean, upon which one fails without Chart and Compas. The *Genesis*, and the sacred Books left us by *Moses* are not sufficient to set us right. *Where they speak of the Creation of Man, of the Formation, or the Re-establishment of a People, 'tis always with Reference to the Jews.* They omit and make no mention of what has not a Tendency to illustrate our Nation. Yet 'tis not to be doubted that there were other People at that time, of which the Fragments that are left us of the History of the first *Egyptians*, the *Ethiopians*, the *Scythians*, and especially the *Chinese*, are convincing Proofs. But our august Legislator only aim'd to give the Characters of our Nation in his Writings, without troubling himself with the mention of others that had no relation to it.

If we go farther back near to the Time of the Flood, we meet with a thousand Difficulties that are insurmountable. 'Tis impossible for us to discover any Trace of the Origin of those considerable Nations and Empires, which we see form'd as it were in an Instant. We read that two or three hundred Years after the Flood *Egypt* was excessively populous.

lous, and that twenty thousand Cities, could scarce contain its Inhabitants. *China, Scythia, and Tartary,* were also flourishing States. How can it be comprehended, that the three Children of *Noah* could in two hundred Years time produce Numbers sufficient to people such vast Provinces, and the Neighbourhood of the *Tigris* and *Euphrates*, which were the first that were inhabited.

I think, dear *Isaac*, that without insisting on all these Difficulties, when one would make a Progress in the History of our Sacred Books, the only History which Time has had so much respect for as to preserve intire, a Man should only give his Attention to the Historical Truths, and abandon all vain Disputes to the Philosophers and Doctors.

A *Nazarene Fryar* *, who entered into a Discussion of these Facts, could not think of a better way to shew the Clearness and Evidence of them, than to make Men with the Dash of his Pen. He made an exact Calculation of the Children, Grand-Children, and Great Grand-Children, &c. which four Men might be supposed to have in the space of 260 Years, and he made the Number to be 268719 Millions of Souls, i. e. many more than would be necessary to people five or six such Worlds as ours. His Arithmetical Calculation has not been able to convince his Adversaries, who say there were not so many Men in reality as have been created with the Dash of a Pen, and that 'twas plain he was not very expert in this Profession. They object, ' That according to the Scriptures, Men had no Children till very late in Life, that they had not a great Number in the whole, and consequently that those Swarms so easy to produce upon Paper, were impossible in Nature. They add, that the Multiplication which

* the *Israelites* made in 250 Years in *Egypt*, from

* Father *Petau*, a Jesuit.

* which

“ which there went out 600,000 fighting Men,
 “ who deriv’d their Origin from 70 Men that settled
 “ in that Country with the Patriarch *Jacob*, pass’d
 “ as a Miracle ; and that this Miracle was never-
 “ theless far short of that Multiplication pretended
 “ to have been made in the Space of 260 Years by
 “ four Persons.”

These insuperable Difficulties have plunged many People into an Error in striving to surmount them. They were of Opinion, that the Deluge was not Universal, and that God, in order for the Punishment of that sinful ungrateful Race which he had chose preferable to other Nations, did, for the Satisfaction of his Justice, only drown the Country which that People inhabited. A famous modern Author * treats of the Existence of several Monarchies before the Flood, and does not deviate from that Opinion which many others have maintain’d by Arguments of Natural and Experimental Philosophy. They pretend that ’tis impossible for a Deluge to happen in the present State of the Earth, so as to be fifteen Cubits higher than the Tops of the highest Mountains. *The Sea*, say they, taken in general, is scarce above 300 Paces in Depth. *The most lofty Mountains*, as M. Gor-dian, or Ararat, are not three Miles above the Surface of the Sea ; so that without allowing the Globe an Extent in proportion to its Height, there must be twelve or fifteen times as much Water as Earth in the Quantity reported in History †. Other Authors have affirm’d it to be impossible for the Rains to be so plentiful to produce such an Effect, and they have back’d their Opinion by that of a celebrated Philosopher ‡, who proves from nice Observations, that

* *Scaliger.*

† Method for the Study of History by the Abbé Langlet.

‡ Father Mersenne.

the most violent Storms produce but an Inch and half of Water in Depth in the Space of half an Hour, which amounts to six Foot in a Day. And the Deluge having lasted but forty natural Days, admitting the highest Mountains an Elevation but of two Miles, which is one third less than their Height, it must follow, that even to equal them, instead of surmounting them, there must fall from the Sky in 24 Hours time 125 Foot of Water, instead of six that it produces in the greatest Storms; which exceeds Possibility and the Powers of Nature.

To what purpose, dear *Isaac*, are all these vain Disputes of the Learned, which cannot clear up one Difficulty? When 'tis affirm'd, that the Deluge was not Universal, and that God had a Design only to punish an ungrateful People that had offended him, is it not ridiculous to offer to bring the pretended Designs of God as a Proof against his own Word, which he has left us in the sacred Books? The *Nazarene* Doctors believe the Certainty of the Writings of *Moses*. To what purpose then are these impertinent Dissertations? Since the History of those remote Times is a Chaos, 'tis absurd to attempt to clear it up; 'tis enough for us to know that *Noah's* three Children were the common Source of the whole Human Race. 'Tis meer loss of Time to attempt to trace the Beginning of the first Monarchies which were form'd by their Descendants. A Man of good Sense would never search farther back than those Times wherein he begins to discover some Light and Certainty in the Historians who treat of them.

These impertinent Researches occasion a Waste of Moments, which might be better employed; and since it has not pleased the Divinity to transmit the Means to us, which he made use of so soon to repeople the World after the Deluge, we ought to be content with the Knowledge that He,

who

who out of Nothing created the Universe, who so wisely maintains and governs it, did not meet with Difficulties in the Execution of his Designs.

To study History with Advantage, 'tis my Opinion, dear *Isaac*, that the original Authors must be consulted as much as possible. Who is capable of being better acquainted with the Manners of a Country, than he who was born and bred in it, who writes in the Heart of it, and to whom the Laws, Manners, and Customs of the Country he treats of, are familiar? What modern Author is vain enough to flatter himself, that he knows the antient *Greeks* as well as *Thucydides*, *Xenophon* and *Plutarch*?

The Historians, who write the Histories of their Countries now-a-days, have not been able to come near to *Titus Livy* and *Tacitus*, in the Nobility, Majesty, and Grandeur of Writing. How could they attain to the Truth which adorns the Characters they have left us, and which they copy'd after Nature?

I seldom make much Account of modern Writers, that compose Histories upon the Events of remote Times. I look upon them as Compilers, and think their Works hardly better than bad Translations. Whoever would know the true Character of the *Greeks* and *Romans*, ought to search for it in the Originals themselves. Would it not be ridiculous if a *German*, desirous to know the Manners and Customs, and the Genius of the *French*, should instead of living with them, when he might do it, choose rather to associate with some *English* who had been at *Paris*? No doubt such a Conduct would be thought extraordinary. 'Tis equally so to expect to know the Manners of the antient *Romans*, from a Man born at *Paris*, and to believe him

him better acquainted therewith than *Salust* or *Titus Livy*.

Two *Nazarene Fryars* * have not long since made a complete Collection of the *Roman History* †, which is so voluminous a Work, that whoever can arm himself with the Patience to read it, would be oblig'd to renounce the Originals. Instead of the lively manly Diction which History requires, one would be apt to say, that *Calprenede* and *Scuderi* had made those two Authors the Heirs of the *Romantic Stile*; for they are altogether as prolix as they, and if they don't describe *Festoons* and *Afragals*, they descend to the mostaultry Speeches of the meanest Writers among the Antients. These Fryars did not consider that in a Work so voluminous as theirs, they ought to have been very sparing in that part of it, and not to surfeit the Reader with continual Declamations of Rhetoric, of which their History is full. It tires the Reader with a Jumble of Facts, that are impertinent, ill-digested, and confusedly huddled together. It presents nothing to the Mind that is clear and concise, or that strikes the Imagination. 'Tis so bad a Copy, and so poor an Imitation of the Antients, that it would be enough to prejudice a Man against the reading of the Originals, if it was reckon'd a true Copy of them. What induc'd those two Authors to club their Talents for such a wretched Performance, I know not. To speak my Mind sincerely, I am of Opinion, that one of them would have been enough for such a

* The Jesuits *Catrou* and *Rouille*.

† I can't imagine how such a Work could ever meet with Approbation. I know that there are many more Fools than wise Men. But really a Man must be egregiously silly to throw away so much Time as is necessary to read that Book.

Collection; only while one work'd upon the Body of the History, the other wrote the Notes to it, which are even worse than the Text.

A Nazarene Doctor * has made another Collection of *Roman History*, not near so perplex'd, and much better. When a Man has form'd a Taste for the original Authors, and acquired from them the Genius, Character, and Manners of the true *Romans*, a great deal of Advantage may be reaped from the Perusal of this modern Author, by the regular Disposition in which he sees many of the Facts that are elsewhere dispers'd, and by the Assistance it furnishes him to find out, all at once, what otherwise he must turn over several Volumes for. But Works of this kind are only useful for two sorts of People; such as being already vers'd thoroughly in the Knowledge of History, have need of a Collection to save them the Trouble of perpetually poring in Originals, for what they have already seen there; and such as being only desirous to read for their Pleasure, and to have a superficial Notion of the past Times, don't care for the Trouble of searching into and collecting a Number of Facts and Events which are in one Author, and not to be met with in another.

When a Man is desirous of being a perfect Master of History, 'tis dangerous for him to begin with the Perusal of modern Books. It should be a *Roman* Author to instruct him in the Manners of his Country, whereas we find a *Frenchman* attempting to give us the Character of *Brutus*, *Cæsar*, *Scipio*; and whatever be the Genius of a modern Author, 'tis impossible but antient History in passing through his Hands must receive a certain Tincture from the present Age to disfigure it.

* The Abbé de Vertot.

The Post is just going off, so that I am forc'd to put an End to my Letter. Another time I will write to thee more at large what I think of this Matter.

Fare thee well, dear *Isaac*, and may the God of our Fathers cause thee to prosper.



LETTER XXXIX.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS,
a Rabbi, at Constantinople.

Paris — — —

ONE sees in *France* now, what perhaps was never seen there before ; that the Women have no Share in the Ministry, and an impenetrable Secrecy reigns in Affairs. The Sovereign and his Minister are both reserv'd, and their Designs are a Mystery to the Public. This rational Conduct is owing to the Wisdom of the Minister, and the early Discretion of the Prince, who at an Age when the Heart is commonly the Dupe of the Passions, lives in the midst of his Court with the strictest Regularity. The *French* are astonish'd to see a Form of Government with which they have hitherto had so little Acquaintance. They know, by Experience, that the Fair Sex has often had more Share in great Affairs, than the Ministers themselves, and know the Prejudice which the State has suffer'd by it.

If I were a King, I should always choose for assisting me in the Government of my Kingdom, such Persons as were attain'd to that Age when the Passions

fions are quite cool ; and if I could have my Will, they should not be marry'd Men. What is there a Woman can't do to influence her Husband, when she is a Woman of Sense, and knows how to accommodate herself to Times and Circumstances ? The greatest Ministers never had a Wife. Perhaps too, they had never rose to that Dignity, if they had had a Domestic Spy upon them, against whose Curiosity they could not have been always upon their Guard.

If we compare the Cardinals *Richlieu*, *Ximenes*, *Mazarine*, and to go farther backwards, the Abbé *Suger*, with other Ministers, one shall perceive a considerable Difference. To set this Matter in a fuller Light, I might quote a great many Examples of our own Time. Who can refuse to the Cardinals *Alberoni* and *Cienfuegos* the Praises due to that vast Penetration which they have shewn in the Affairs committed to their Management ? Not that I pretend to maintain, but there are some Persons, who, notwithstanding their Attachment to the Fair Sex, know how to be too cunning for them ; but this is a difficult Effort, and when a Man has the Care of public Affairs, it rarely happens that he can be so duly upon his guard, but a crafty Woman, who has a Place in his Heart, will sooner or later get some Knowledge of his Secret.

The late Duke Regent had the Art of gaining the Ascendant over his Foible. Tho' he was ten times in a Day a Slave to different Beauties, yet Love did not usurp over his Politics, and in the Height of his Joy, Pleasures, and Transport, the Minister was separated from the Lover. But where, my dear *Isaac*, shall we find such great unshaken Genius's, as was that of this Prince ? Tho' Calumny, Imposture, Rebellion, and Monkish Hypocrisy

caball'd together, under the Veil of Religion and Justice, to cast their fatal Venom upon his most innocent Actions ; yet as the Wind scatters the Clouds, he defeated their pernicious Conspiracy, and in the Punishment which he inflicted upon his Enemies he made the fuller Display of the Greatness of his Soul and his Intrepidity.

How few such Characters are there in the World ? History has scarce transmitted one to us in several Centuries. On the contrary we always found, that Women gave the decisive Stroke to great Affairs. What Springs did not the Princess of *Eboli* set a going in the Reign of *Philip II.* notwithstanding that Prince's Wisdom and Policy ? Did not the Ladies force *Henry IV.* to put an end to a War which was very successful in its Beginning, and did they not, by their Artifice and secret Machinations, persuade him to undertake another, the Consequences of which were doubtful, and the Preparations for which were partly the Cause of his Death ? Madam *de Chevrcuse* set a hundred Machines at work both at home and abroad, which put the Kingdom into one of the most tumultuous Ferments ; so that how turbulent soever the Cardinal *de Retz* was, he did not do near so much Harm. The Factions of *Westminster* were animated by the Countess of *Carlisle*, a Lady who resided at *Whitchall*, and was the Life and Soul of them.

All Precautions against being seduc'd by the Charms of the Fair Sex are in vain. It signifies nothing to load them with the Characters of Ambition, Indiscretion, Partiality, and Caprice ; for notwithstanding all these Faults with which they are reproach'd, the Ladies have been acknowledg'd at all Times, and in all Courts, to be the *Primum Mobile* of great Events. *Therefore*, says an excellent

lent Author *, the wise Courtier takes care how he makes one of 'em his Enemy, or of speaking against them in general. *Woe be to those who look upon them as a weak frail Sex.* There is no Enemy so dangerous as a Woman. She who thinks she has not Power or Credit enough to do mischief by herself, is so cunning as to unite with some other. An artful Minister in the Management of his Master's Interest, is sure to be outwitted by an outragious Woman who thirsts for Revenge. The Ladies are the harder to be pacify'd when they think themselves affronted; for they are persuaded in their Minds, that the Forgiveness and Forgetfulness of an Offence are but imaginary Virtues.

When a Woman is personally interested in a State-Affair, or Conspiracy, Nature seems to make a surprizing Effort in her, and to change her Being. There is no getting the Secret out of her, and she is as taciturn in whatever relates to it, as she is loquacious in the Affairs of others. To be convinc'd of the Truth of this, one need only review the principal Transactions of some late Reigns. 'Twas in vain for the League to consult Ways and Means for the Assassination of *Henry III.* but Madam *de Montpensier*, the Sister of the *Guises*, was no sooner let into the Plot, but she caus'd it to be put in execution; she artfully brought a Monk into her Scheme, and persuaded him to commit the most enormous of Crimes under the Appearance of Religion. The pernicious Designs of the *Spaniards* against *Henry IV.* wou'd never have had their fatal Effects if they had been only supported by the old Duke *d'Epernon*; but when the Dutchesse *de Verneuil*, that Monarch's disgrac'd Mistres, conspir'd against him, he unhappily fell a Sacrifice to her.

* *St. Evremont.*

The Power and Sway of the Women do for the most part regulate the Motions of the Ottoman Empire. Who would believe that the Sultaness, shut up in a Seraglio, and debarr'd from the Sight of those whom a barbarous Operation has not struck out of the Class of Men, should govern *Turky*, name the Vizier and the Mufti, espouse the Interests of the Basha of *Cairo*, or the Basha of *Babylon*, whom she never knew ; and that, by an endless Circulation, the Motions and Passions with which she is agitated in the solitary Apartments of her Palace, should be extended to the End of the Empire ?

The Character of Mistress is much more dangerous than that of Wife, to obtain an absolute Power over Mens Hearts. There is often a Pleasure in granting to a Mistress, what ought by all Means to be deny'd to a Wife. Love seems not to demand that Strictness ; and this Passion where it has seiz'd Men who have the Care of the Public Affairs, is much more dangerous than Marriage. 'Tis in vain for them to resist the first Attacks, for sooner or later they are sure to yield. A Man really in Love, and who all the while is absolute Master of himself, is a Prodigy that has not been known these 3000 Years. Nothing is too hard for an amiable Woman that has a Desire to please : She pursues a Design better and more securely than our Sex, who, notwithstanding their boasted Strength and Courage, fall every Day into the most obvious Snares.

If we take a View of the Great Men who have resisted the Impressions they were liable to from certain Women with whom they were in Love, we shall find they were not so amorous as vicious. When a Man idolizes the Fair Sex in general, and when the Heart is not fix'd by an Attachment to one single Object, the Passions are not so violent nor so dangerous ; a Man is then in the Case of the

Duke

Duke Regent, of whom I have just now given thee a Character. Changeableness and Inconstancy secure the Firmness of his Opinions, and support his Politics against the Attacks of Love. So *Alexander* and *Julius Cæsar* had their Foibles, but they did not prove their Ruin; for the Change of the Objects prevented their becoming Slaves, and secur'd them from that Misfortune into which *Anthony* was plung'd by that Great Man's settled Passion for *Cleopatra*.

We might quote a thousand Instances in our own Time to justify this Opinion; and without having recourse to antient History, one might venture to affirm, that for 200 Years the Women have had much more share than the Men in the Government of *Europe*. I should be tempted to add that they have during this Space of Time shar'd their Credit with the Priests and Fryars. Perhaps the latter Sentiment is every wit as true as the former.

My own Reason tells me, dear *Isaac*, that a King ought not to chuse his Ministers but among such Persons in whose Hearts the Fire of the violent Passions has been deaden'd by Age. If it be impossible that he should find such in the State of Celibacy, he ought at least not to expose them all at once to the Ascendant of a Wife and the Tenderness of a Mistress; which is too much for the Security of the Secrets committed to their keeping. If I were a Sovereign I wou'd act in the choice of my first Ministers, much after the same Manner as the College of Cardinals does in the Nomination of the sovereign Pontiffs. The Infirmities and Debaucheries of some who have been elected while they were young, have convinc'd the *Nazarenes* of the Necessity of having recourse to the only infallible Means that can serve as a Fence against the Passions of the Heart; for they only trust the Authority of the

Church with Persons whom Age has rendered incapable of certain Actions.

In a well-govern'd State the Ministers must be old, and the Generals of the Armies young. When I say young, I mean, tho' arriv'd to Years of Maturity of Sense, yet so young as to act with Strength and Vigour. The Minister ought to think and reflect in his Closet. The General ought to execute. The former ought to be a Man of consummate Wisdom, who is not heated by that Fury and Valour which is the Life and Character of the Military Man. For too much Heat, too much Thirst for Glory, may be prejudicial to a Government. At an Age where Experience is wanting, or too much limited, private Interest is often confounded with the Public, and a Man's own Heart deceives him. The Great Prince of *Conde* at twenty Years of Age was a famous General, but not very well qualified for a Minister. Cardinal *Mazarine* reduc'd him twenty times to the worst of Situations; and that skilful *Italian* oblig'd him in the End to have recourse to him. *Alexander*, who at twenty Years of Age was the Master of *Asia*, would never have been more than plain King of *Macedon*, if his Father *Philip* had not done that by his Politics in *Greece*, which himself did by his Arms in *Perse*.

I consider a Minister as a Man who may be influenc'd by the smallest Passions to commit the greatest Errors: And as it is impossible to be a Man, and not be subject to Humanity, the advanc'd Age which divests us of a part of our Prejudices, our Passions, and our impetuous Motions, makes us better qualify'd for the Care of the public Affairs.

It might be objected to me, that this Prudence, this Wisdom which I demand in a Minister ought to be in a General of an Army, and to make a Part

of his Character. Consequently they must be both of an advanc'd Age, But 'tis easy to perceive, that the Experience which the one ought to have, is very different from that which the other ought to acquire. To know the Hearts of Men, the Interests of States, the Laws of a Kingdom, the Methods of making Trade to flourish, to acquire the Esteem of Foreign Nations, the Love of his Prince's Allies, and the Fear of his Enemies, are Talents very different from those which relate to the Art of knowing how to form a Camp, to regulate the March of an Army, to draw it up in Battalia, to lead it forth to Battle, and to render it Victorious. In a General there must be Judgment, Valour and Activity. In a Minister there must be profound Policy, a perpetual Observation of those Transactions which seem of least Moment ; and that Regard to Equity which may preserve the Honour of his Prince, without lessening his Credit and Authority. The Fatigues of the Minister are in his Closet, while he sits in his easy Chair ; but the Labour and Pains of a General demand a vigorous Constitution, capable of bearing up against the most violent Fatigues. Every Age produces a Score of Generals, but scarce one Minister.

Fare thee well, my dear *Isaac*, and live joyful and content.





LETTER XL.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS,
a Rabbi, at Constantinople.

Paris —

A Man was apprehended here yesterday, and carried to the common Goal, to whom antient Greece would have erected Statues. This was a sturdy Beggar, in comparison of whom *Diogenes* seems to have been but a School-Boy. He begg'd Charity with a Front which favour'd of Insolence, and abus'd every one that did not oblige him. His Insults were borne with for some time, till having the Assurance to enter the House of a Farmer-General, and to sit down at his Table in his greasy tatter'd Garb, the Master of the House surpriz'd at the Fellow's Freedom, order'd his Men to turn him out of Doors. The modern Cynic thereupon gave the Farmer very ill Language; and the Result of it was, that the Philosopher was committed to Prison. They say, in the mean time, that he is really an ingenious Man, only 'twas his settled Resolution to take to this way of Life. 'Tis a Misfortune to him that he was not born 2000 Years ago, when the same Impertinences which have now brought him to a Dungeon, wou'd have elevated him to Immortality.

If the seven Wise Men of *Greece* were now living, some of them would be look'd upon as Men of Wit, and allow'd the Liberty for their Maintenance.

tenance to dedicate Books to Officers of the Revenue; and others would run the risk of being starv'd, or perhaps of being imprison'd in a Hospital of Fools. I am, at least, very sure, that the Beggar they have confin'd at *Paris* has not committed a fourth Part of the foolish Pranks which *Diogenes* play'd at *Athens*. How could People of such Sense as the *Grecians*, consecrate the scandalous Actions of that Cynic with the Name of Wisdom? I would forgive him for going thro' the Streets with a Lan-thorn and Candle to seek for a Man at Noon-Day, but I can't bear his scandalizing Humanity by his enormous Vices, and then making his Boast of it*. The Philosophers were generally vain Men, whose most remarkable Actions were only owing to the Desire they had of being fam'd for extraordinary People.

When I look upon *Diogenes* passing his Life in a Tub, I consider him as a perpetual Martyr to his Vanity; for his pretended Mortification and his Austerity were the Consequences of his Pride. *Plato*, a Man of such real Merit that it wanted not the Support of any such Mummery, walking with some Friends by the side of a River, one of them desir'd him to cast his Eye upon *Diogenes*, who was then standing in the Water up to his Chin, when it was in the Depth of the Winter, and the Surface of the River was cover'd with Ice, except where *Diogenes* made a Hole to go into it. *Don't look at him*, said *Plato*, *but turn your Eyes off to the other Side*, and he will soon get out of the Water; for he only gave himself the Trouble of going into it, because

* Παντ' αγε. Διογένης εφεγε ταῦτα τοῖς φίλοις

Ηειδερ παλαιῷ Δαιδός ε καλεων.

Omnia sanè Diogenes effugit hæc. Nuptias vero, Perfecit Dextrâ; Laide nihil opus habens.

Antholog. Epigram. LXXX. lib. vii.

be saw us a coming. The Contempt which *Plato* expressed of *Diogenes's* Follies, drew the Hatred of that *Cynic* upon him; so that he went one Day to his House, and walking with very great Disdain upon the rich Carpet that was spread on his Floor: *See*, said he, *how I trample the Pride of Plato under my Feet.* Yes, said *Plato*, but your *Pride in doing so* is much the greater.

In all times Vanity seems to have been the favourite Vice of the Great Men. They who have wrote against Glory, Ambition, and the Envy of being immortaliz'd, have prefix'd their Names to their Books with a View of attaining to it. The Philosophers have not been the only People touched with this Passion, it being generally engrav'd and imprinted on the Hearts of all Men, who have a Genius superior to the Vulgar. The Desire of Glory and Praise has more contributed to make Conquerors, than any Fondness for augmenting their Dominions. *Alexander* gave Kingdoms away as fast as he conquer'd them, and reserv'd to himself no Reward for his Labours but the Glory of having surmounted them. A noble Ambition is profitable to Society, otherwise the Arts would languish, and the Sciences would be neglected. The Desire of Immortality, the Satisfaction accruing from Praise, give more Force to the Springs of Action, than Gold and pecuniary Rewards.

In those Countries where the Subjects are not animated by a Desire of Glory, one finds a Decay in all the Liberal Arts, which extends even to the meanest Professions. 'Tis said, that in *Spain* when a Man goes to a Shoe-maker to be measur'd for a Pair of Shoes, *Crispin* asks his Wife how much Money there is left in the Purse? If there be but two or three Crowns, he proudly bids his Customer go about his Business, and continues scraping

scraping upon his Guitar: Not that the Spaniards are not fond of Glory, Vanity being the chief Attribute of their Character; but 'tis a ridiculous Glory which favours more of Pride and Arrogance than the Desire of immortalizing their Name.

When a Man's Passion to be transmitted to posterity, is not supported by Honour and Virtue, it may possibly throw him into great Errors. *Erostratus* burnt the Temple at *Ephesus* to make his Name immortal; and we are assured that this was one of the Reasons which determined *Nero* to set fire to the four Corners of *Rome*. The Emperor *Charles V.* had like to have been a Sacrifice to the Phrenzy of an Idolizer of Immortality; for this Prince being at *Rome*, at the Top of St. Peter's Dome, and looking down from thence to the Bottom of the Church, one of his Courtiers that was just by him, had a strong Temptation to throw himself down headlong, and to take the Emperor with him; which he thought was a sure way to eternize his Name: But happily for *Charles V.* he did not put it in Execution; and the Courtier telling him of it in Confidence when he was come down, the Prince thank'd him very cordially for not having forc'd him to take such a desperate Leap, but forbade him ever coming again into his Presence.

An immoderate Thirst for Glory sometimes seizes the Imagination of People in low Life. A Goat-herd of a Village near *Nismes* in *Languedoc*, having no Temple of *Ephesus* to burn, and not being willing to destroy any of the *Nazarene* Churches, thought, like another *Erostratus*, of a very comical Expedient to immortalize himself in his own Country. He stay'd till the Vines were in Blossom, and by the Help of a Flock of two hundred Goats which he

led into all the Vineyards, he began the Vintage three or four Months before-hand, and depriv'd the whole Country of their Grapes. This Goat-herd being apprehended and examined what made him commit such an Action, he answered very gravely, that 'twas the best Expedient he could think on to be talk'd of after he was dead. The Judges, who dreaded the Consequences of a Thirst for Glory so pernicious to the Country, condemn'd him to be shut up in an Hospital of Madmen, where he died.

I return to the antient Philosophers. If the Actions committed by some of them were not so hurtful to Society, they were never the less extravagant. What must a Man of good Sense think of a Person who, after having studied all his Life-time, caus'd his Eyes to be bor'd out, that he might have the more Leisure for Meditation *? What Judgment can he form of a pretended Philosopher, who threw himself into the *Euripus*, because he could not account for its Ebbing and Flowing †? What Nation, in short, can he have of the Wisdom of the Learned, from the immoderate Laughter of *Democritus*, and the continual Tears of *Heraclitus* ‡,

* Scriptum est—*Democritum*—Luminibus Oculorum suâ sponte se privasse, quia æstimaret Cogitationes Commentationesque Animi sui in Contemplandis Naturæ Rationibus vegetiores & exactiores fore si eas videndi illesebris & Oculorum impedimentis liberasset. *Aul. Gellius Noct. Atticar.* lib. x. cap. 17.

† See what is said about Aristotle's Death in the *Secret Memoirs of the Republic of Letters*, letter 5.

‡ *La Mothe le Vayer* has endeavour'd, tho' imperfectly, to justify the perpetual Laughter of *Democritus*, and the Tears of *Heraclitus*. Consult that Author's Treatise of the *Virtue of the Pagans*, tom. i. p. 620. &c. the folio Edition. See also the *Secret Memoirs of the Republic of Letters*, letter 5.

who was so very complaisant as to afflict himself for the whole Race of Mankind, and who would even have extended his weeping Charity to the *Antipodes*, if he had known there was such a People.

Socrates, *Plato*, and *Epicurus*, were, in my Opinion, the wisest Philosophers of Antiquity. I say nothing as to the Truth of their Opinions; but their Writings are eminent for Wisdom, Caution, and Candour; which were accompanied with the Regularity of their Morals *. Reason was the Rule of these great Men. They quitted the World to avoid the Perplexities of it, without hating the Human Race. In the Solitude to which they often retir'd, for the sake of Contemplation, they still retain'd an Approbation of those worldly Pleasures which are relish'd by good Men, and only prevented them from being too noxious to them by becoming too violent. I should be tempted to place *Epicetus* next to those great Men, but his too great Severity seems to me to have been misplaced, and I think it a Consequence of his Vanity. I always perceive a Chagrin predominant in his moral Tracts, and the Philosopher has still some Twang of the Ill-humour of *Epaphroditus's Slave*.

I think a Firmness of Mind in Misfortunes, a Virtue worthy of Admiration. But I would not have Constancy extended to Barbarity and Fierceness. I look upon the *Stoics* as melancholy Madmen, with

* By the Writings of *Socrates* must be understood the *memorable Things* of *Socrates*, a Work of which *Xenophon* is the Author, or rather the Copyist; because it is nothing more or less than the principal Sayings of *Socrates* in his Life-time. We have nothing more left us of *Epicurus*, than some Fragments which are preserv'd in the Writings of several Authors; and of so many Books which that Philosopher compos'd, not one is come down to our Time.

whom Wisdom was a barbarous Virtue, of more Trouble than Profit to Mankind. I am for a Humane Philosophy, which adapts itself to the Good of Society, and which, at the same time that it dictates an Abhorrence of Vice, does not represent the Path which leads to Wisdom as unpassable. I am for a moral System, which does not impose a Yoke that is insupportable, and which, by putting a Curb to our Passions, serves us as a Barrier against the Enormities to which our Constitution and the Violence of our Passions may hurry us. I esteem a Philosopher to whom Vice is hateful; but I expect that he should have a Compassion for the Vicious, and that he should cure their Errors by Discourses full of good Nature, good Sense and Truth, free from pedantic Declamations.

The true *Epicureans* (I mean those who had not corrupted the moral System of their Master) were Men of infinitely better Sense than the *Stoics*. I take the latter to be Fools, whose heated Imagination had form'd an extravagant chimærical Notion of the sovereign Good, which never entered into the Brain of Man before. How ridiculous, how vain must that Man be, who, for the sake of adhering to a Sect, look'd upon himself as a God? He appropriated to himself the august Name of Wise; and the wise Man, according to him, always enjoy'd all Happiness and all Virtues *. Being

free

* 'Tis very certain, that a Man really wise and virtuous, is much more happy and tranquil than a Criminal, let his Rank be ever so high, because in the midst of his Greatness he is devour'd by his Passions and his Remorse. If the *Stoics* had said no more than this, they would have talk'd very rationally, but they carried Things to an Extremity; and *Cicero*, to whom this Sentiment was not displeasing, owns however that the *Stoics* made Wisdom

to;

free in the midst of Slavery, handsome notwithstanding his Deformity, rich in his Poverty, and suffering no Harm in Torments, he was more a Deity than a Man. Is it possible for the Mind of Man to be so distracted and frenzical, and to make such an impression on the Imagination, as to persuade a Person who suffers acute Pains that he is truly happy? Nothing but Vanity can produce so senseless an Opinion, and as much Gravity as *Epicetus* affects, when his Master cut his Leg off for spite, his not complaining is an Effect of his Pride, and not of his Moderation.

There is but one single Idea that is capable of making a Man bear Torments with Pleasure, tho' it does not procure an Insensibility, and that is the Hopes of a greater Good than the Evil which is suffer'd. Thus, in the various Religions, those Persons who have been put under severe Restraints and Punishments, have blessed those Pains which they imagin'd would procure them Pleasures everlasting. They were not willing, by an Abjuration of their Faith, to put an End to temporary Tortures, for which they expected to be requited by eternal Rewards. But the *Stoics* had no other Consolation in their Sufferings, than the Vanity of supporting their Misfortunes without complaining.

Fare thee well, dear *Isaac*, and let me hear from thee now and then; for I think 'tis a long while since I had any of thy Letters.

to be so pure and so sublime a Quality, that no Person could ever attain to it. *Negant enim*, he is speaking of the *Stoics*, *quenquam Virum bonum esse nisi sapientem. Sit ita sanè, sed eam sapientiam interpretantur, quare adhuc Mortalis nemo est consecutus.* Cicero de Amicitia, cap. 5.

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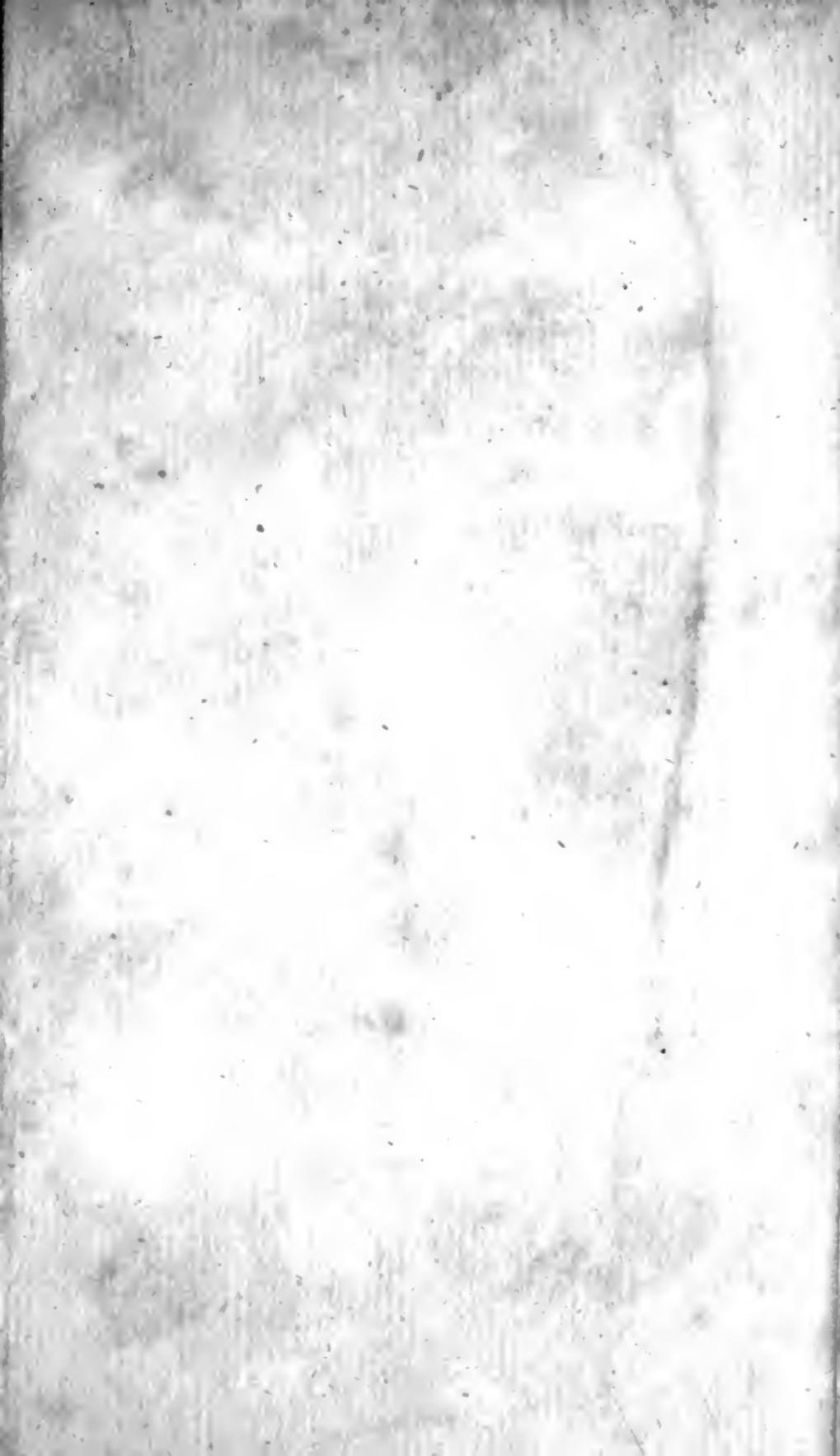
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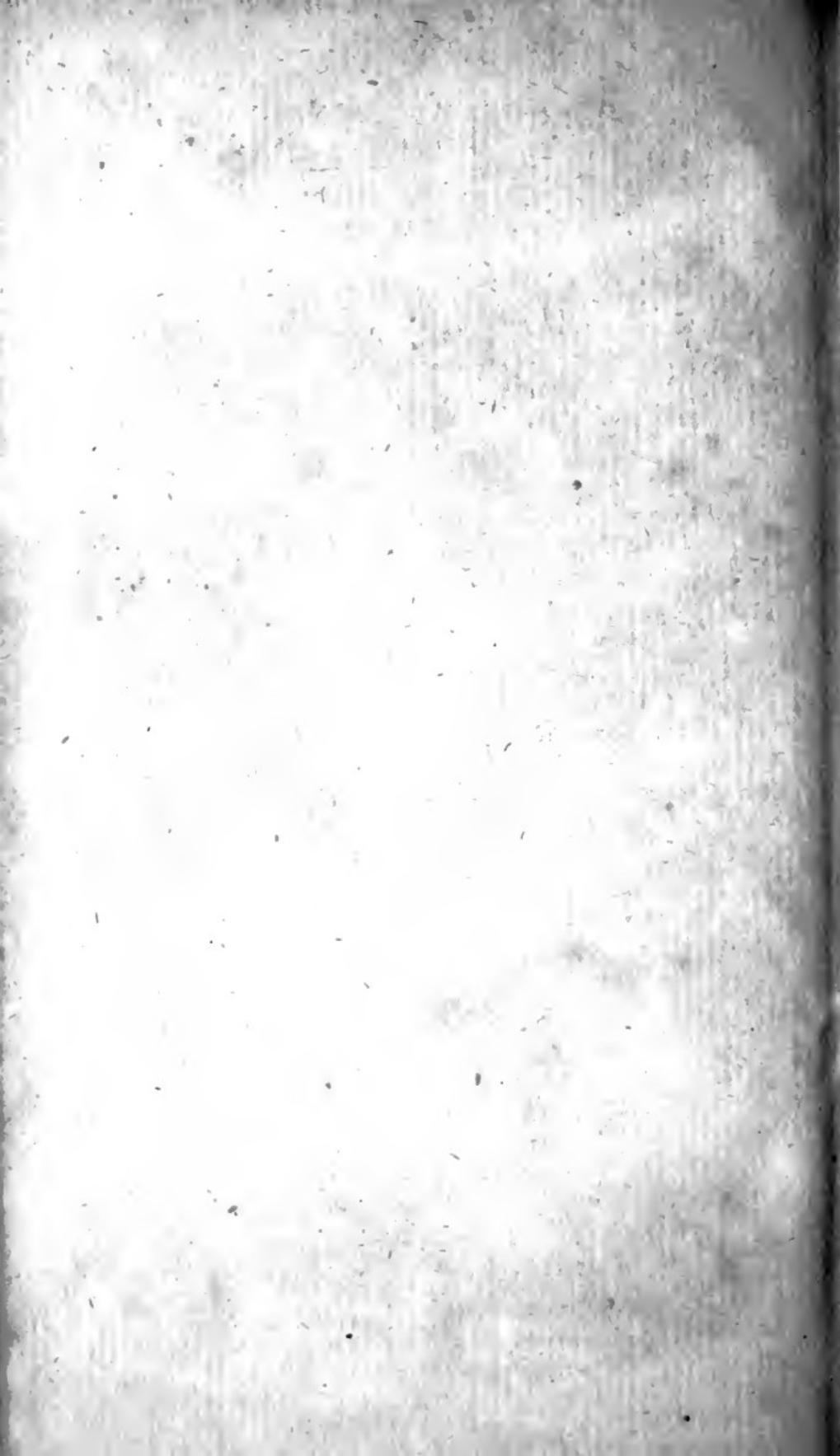
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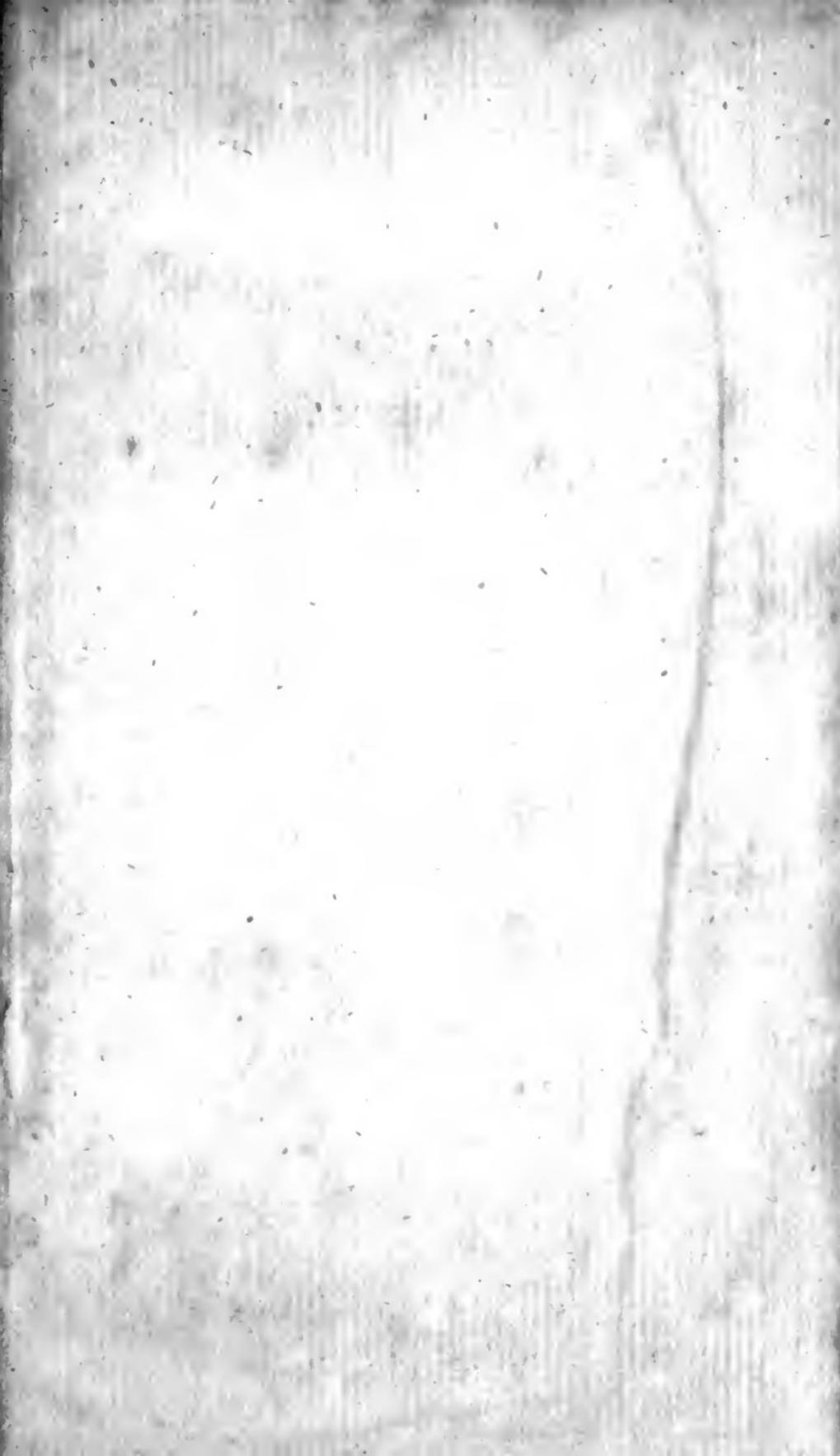
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